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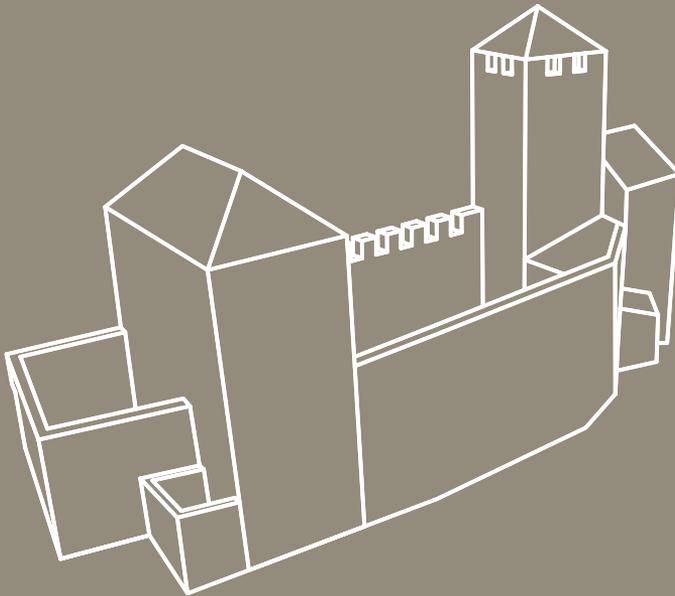
European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION



ISTRIAN CASTLES



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TAKE IT SLOW “Smart and Slow Tourism Supporting Adriatic Heritage for Tomorrow” is a strategic project within the INTERREG VA Italy-Croatia Cross-Border Collaboration Programme from 2014 to 2020 designed to manage and promote the Adriatic region as an innovative, green, sustainable, creative, accessible trans-border destination aimed at empowerment and promotion of the concept of slow and smart tourism.

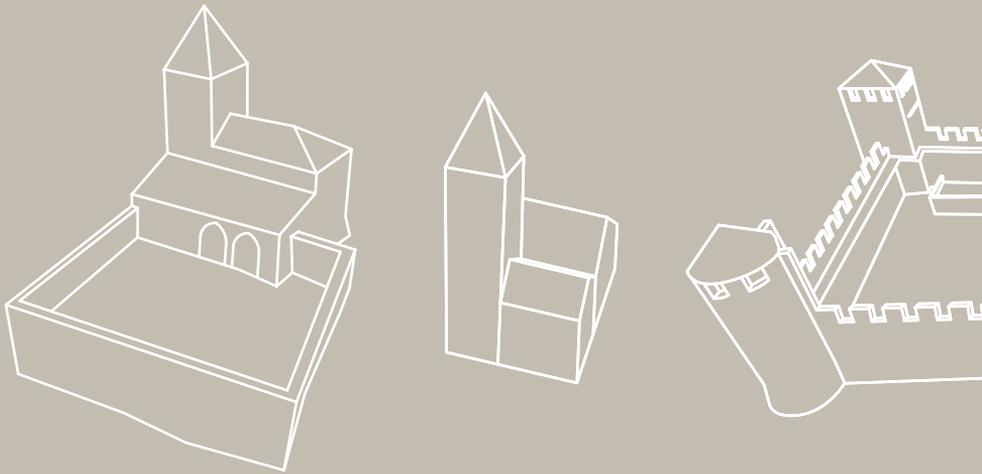
The overall project goal is to boost prosperity and potential of green growth of Adriatic islands, coastal and inland regions surrounding the Adriatic as highly specialised TAKE IT SLOW destinations through stimulating cross-border partnership in order to achieve tangible changes in destination management. The project will focus on the potentials of natural and cultural heritage for the development of sustainable tourism with a view to achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion of a common cross-border Adriatic tourist destination, allowing regional and local stakeholders to share knowledge, develop and implement pilot-projects and test new policies, products and services.

Within the project, the Region of Istria will be opening the House of Castles Visitor Centre as a contemporary architectural marker of the object of traditional architecture whose interior design reinterprets the tower and the palas of the castle. It provides innovative and multimedia interpretation of the cultural route of all Istrian castles accessible to persons with sensory impairments, combining common heritage of Adriatic trans-border regions traditionally sharing firm historical ties with Istria, most evident through the ruling patrician families that lived in Istrian castles.

The project, worth a total of 3,764,695.71 euros, of which 85 per cent co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, and 15 per cent by partner organisations, is jointly carried out by the Dubrovnik-Neretva Region (lead partner), the Region of Istria, Public Institution RERA SD for Coordination and Development of the Split-Dalmatia Region, Public Institution Development Agency of the Šibenik-Knin Region, the University of Zadar, PromoTurismo FVG, Veneto Region – Department for Tourism, Emilia-Romagna Region, SVIM Development Agency of the Marche Region, the Abruzzo Region, the Molise Region, Public Theatre of Puglia – Regional Consortium for Arts and Culture and the Puglia Region as associated partner.

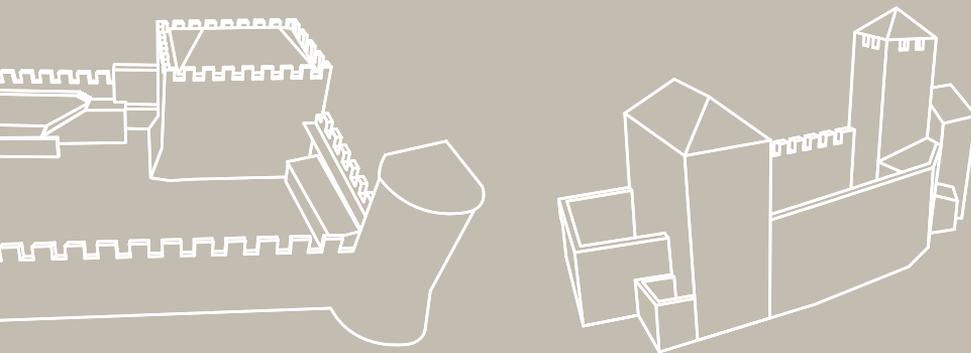
ISTRIAN

Listening to Witnesses of Past Centuries:



CASTLES

The Historical Trajectory of Istrian Medieval Castles





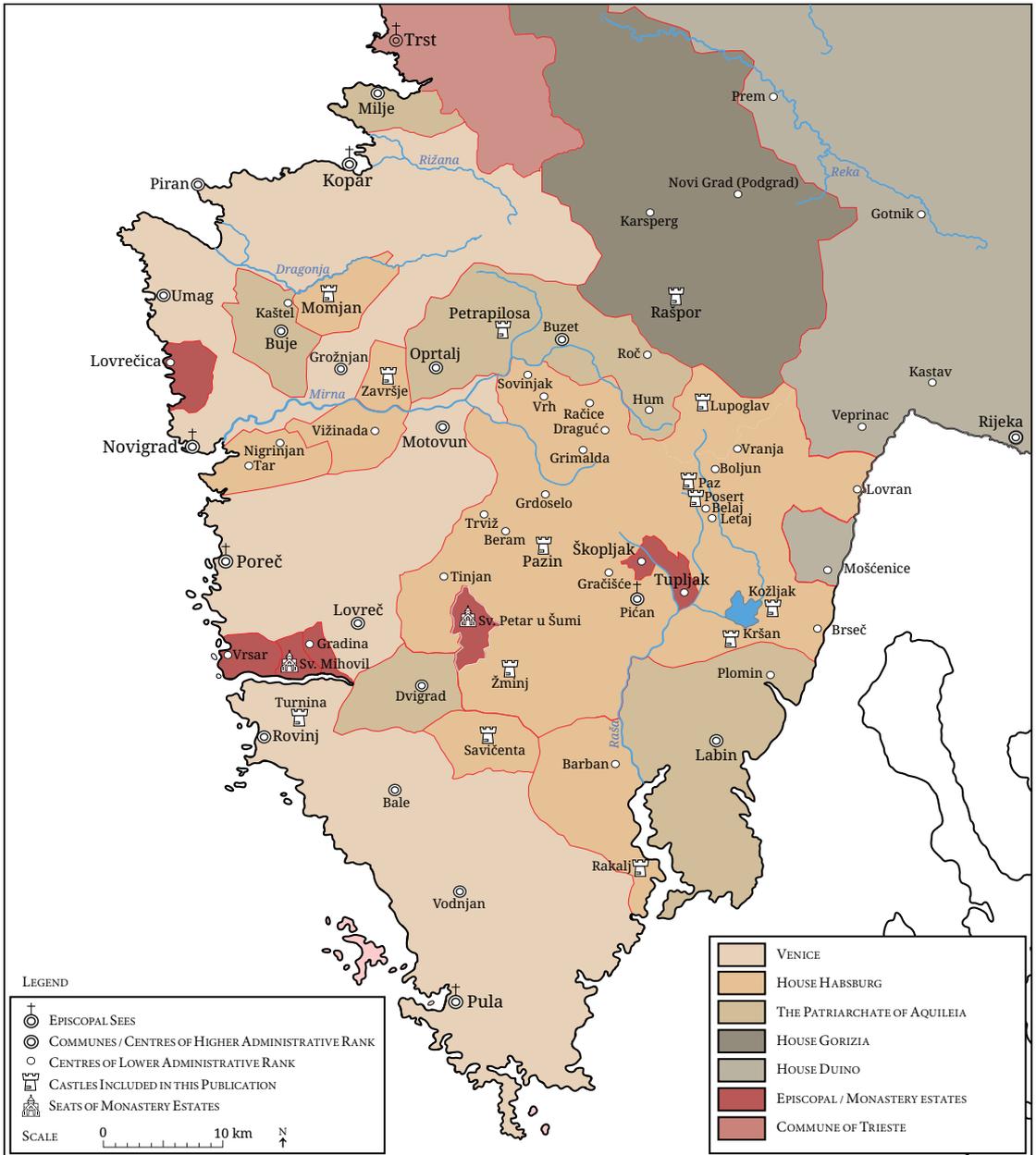
With their architecture and historical heritage, castles are some of the most representative symbols of the Middle Ages. The monumental stone giants that dominate their landscapes from hilltops remind us even today of the long-gone centuries, the age of knights and princesses, swords and quills, nobles and troubadours. As important witnesses of the past, the castles hide stories from historical periods in which our modernity was being formed and Europe was being shaped as a geo-cultural entity with numerous peoples, kingdoms and political-administrative regions, a vast area that despite its territorial heterogeneity remained united by ancient Roman tradition, Latin written culture, and the Christian Catholic faith. As a European region, Istria emerged as a multicultural province with Italo-Romance, Germanic, and Slavic ethno-cultural heritage precisely in the Middle Ages. The medieval period therefore held crucial importance for a region like Istria that, due to its cultural and historical heritage, requires a broader, European interpretative context. Medieval castles reveal just such Istria, a border region marked by numerous European historical factors such as emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, powerful noble families, weakened ecclesiastical dignitaries and, without a doubt, the most important – the Most Serene ruler of the Adriatic, the Republic of Venice.

The stories of castles are in fact stories of medieval fates, marriages and sieges, betrayals and new friendships, high international politics and daily life of a common man; through them, one learns of the turbulent historical development of this distinctive European region that is Istria. This publication, therefore, presents the historical trajectories of seventeen castles in the Istrian hinterlands, selected according to their current accessibility to all who want to visit or get more information about them, among other places, even in the House of Castles in Momjan. The selection criteria were not based solely on the amount of content now offered in these Istrian castles, but primarily on the role they played in the overall historical development of the region.



Dominium Veneciarum: Estates under Venetian rule at the height of Venetian power (15th–16th century), source: modified version of the map originally published in Thomas F. Madden, *Venice: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2012)

With the death of Albert III of Gorizia (1374) who bequeathed all the Istrian estates of this house to the Habsburg family, the hereditary (arch)dukes of Austria, the County of Pazin with all the other lordships in Istria that recognized the power of Aquileian advocates passes into the hands of the new, much more powerful lords. Then, in the war between Patriarch Ludwig of Teck and the Venetian Republic (1411–1421), Venice again defeated the crippled Prince of Aquileia. But this time, on the wings of an ever-expanding dominion, Venice decided to occupy and annex the entire secular state of the Church of Aquileia. Thus, with the fall of Petrapilosa and Buzet in July of 1421, the Margraviate of Istria and the ecclesiastical lordship of the patriarchs of Aquileia officially ceased to exist. Istria was finally divided into Venetian and Austrian parts, and this division would last until the fall of Venice in 1797.



Political map of Istria, 1374, author: Josip Banić

Monumental Edifices Mirror Power and Wealth

Even though the combat-defensive dimension is certainly a characteristic of every castle, it would be wrong to look at these medieval edifices exclusively from a military perspective. Castles were an important component of the symbols of power and wealth of noble families. The castle motif was often found on aristocratic seals, coats of arms or paintings, thus establishing a close connection between the family and the monumental buildings they governed. For example, the castle in Savičenta is shown on the background of a portrait of Morosina Morosini from the end of the 16th century.



Portrait of Dogaressa Morosina Morosini (1545–1614)

Accordingly, it was in the interest of aristocratic rulers to keep their castles as lavish and representative as possible, which required a large able-bodied population on the surrounding estates under the same jurisdiction. That is why codified laws are often enacted that officially prescribe the rights and obligations of both rulers and the subject population, as was for example the case with Morosini Castle in Savičenta. All this contributes to a certain economic and cultural growth with the epicentre right in the castle. Therefore, it is not surprising that the oldest copies of the famous late medieval document, the so-called *Istrian Demarcation*, were found in the castles in Momjan and Kršan.

Istrian Demarcation

The famous *Istrian Demarcation* is a combination of several documents created between the late 13th and the late 14th centuries which the author, most probably the priest and notary Mikula from Cologorica, compiled into a single work with a certain level of artistic freedom, turning dry legal documents on demarcations into a distinctive narrative. Apparently, the *Istrian Demarcation* was originally written in three languages: Latin, German and Croatian, of which only the Croatian version written in the Glagolitic script has survived to this day by way of two transcripts from the 16th century. As a late medieval historical source composed in the 15th or early 16th century, but based on earlier documents, the *Istrian Demarcation* provides a unique insight into various aspects of the Istrian medieval cosmos.



The first folio of the oldest preserved transcript of the *Istrian Demarcation*, the so-called Kršan copy from 1546, Zagreb, Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica (National and University Library), ms. R.3677

Strong Ties With European Regions

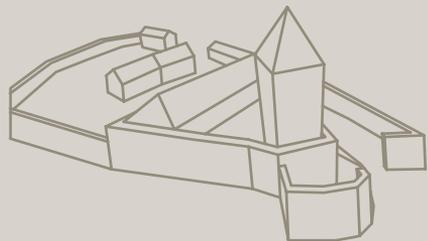
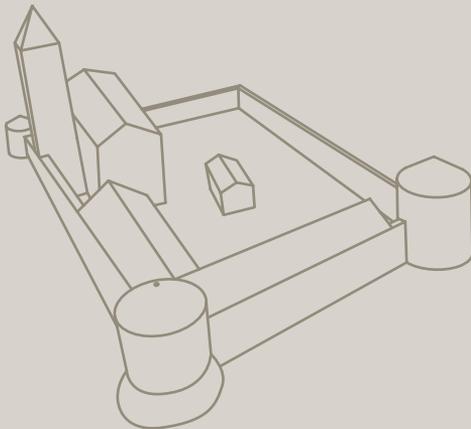
Castles were also links that connected Istria with various European regions, primarily those of the Apennine Peninsula, most often from the area of today's Veneto region. Istrian castles attracted many noble and reputable families from Italy, such as the Rota family from Bergamo who bought Momjan, the Venetian patricians Morosini and Grimani who ruled over Savičenta, Contarini who bought Završje and the Marquises of Montecuccoli who were entrusted with Pazin and its county. Through their actions and in some cases through their centuries-old presence, all these families have left an indelible mark in the cultural and historical landscape of Istria.

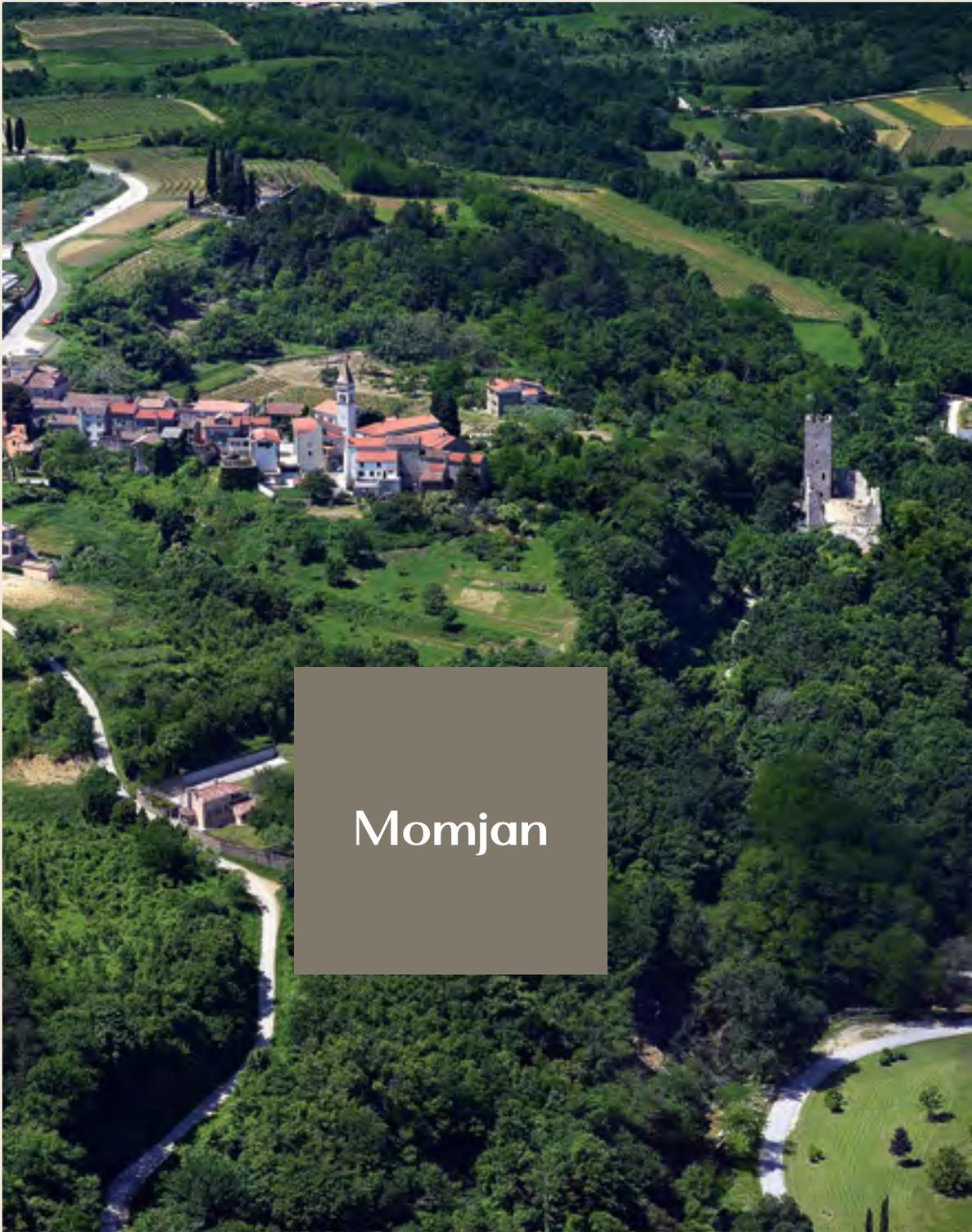
Frequent wars between the political factors of medieval and Early Modern Istria influenced the construction and refortification of numerous castles, especially those in the border zones along the boundaries of administrative enclaves. Of course, the losers were often forced to defortify their castles, as was the case with the castle in Momjan in the mid-14th century. While Momjan managed to survive this death sentence, revived in the next century again as a *castrum* or town, many castles were not so lucky. Istrian castles suffered the most damage during the Uskok War (1615–1618) when many of their walls fell before the cannon fire of the warring Venetian and Austrian forces, and when many fortifications met their infamous demise. The 17th century marked a steep decline in the power of the Venetian Republic, once the stalwart queen of the Adriatic and defender of Istria. The peninsula fell into a difficult post-war period of recovery in which medieval castles, even those that, like Petrapilosa, survived the devastation of war, have never again shone in their old garb. It was certainly the end of an era.

This contribution, a part of a comprehensive reevaluation of the cultural and historical heritage of medieval castles and revitalization of their modern tourist offer, ceremoniously opens a new chapter in the rich history of Istria, an era in which these medieval edifices, dressed in brand new garb, will find their long-lost splendour.

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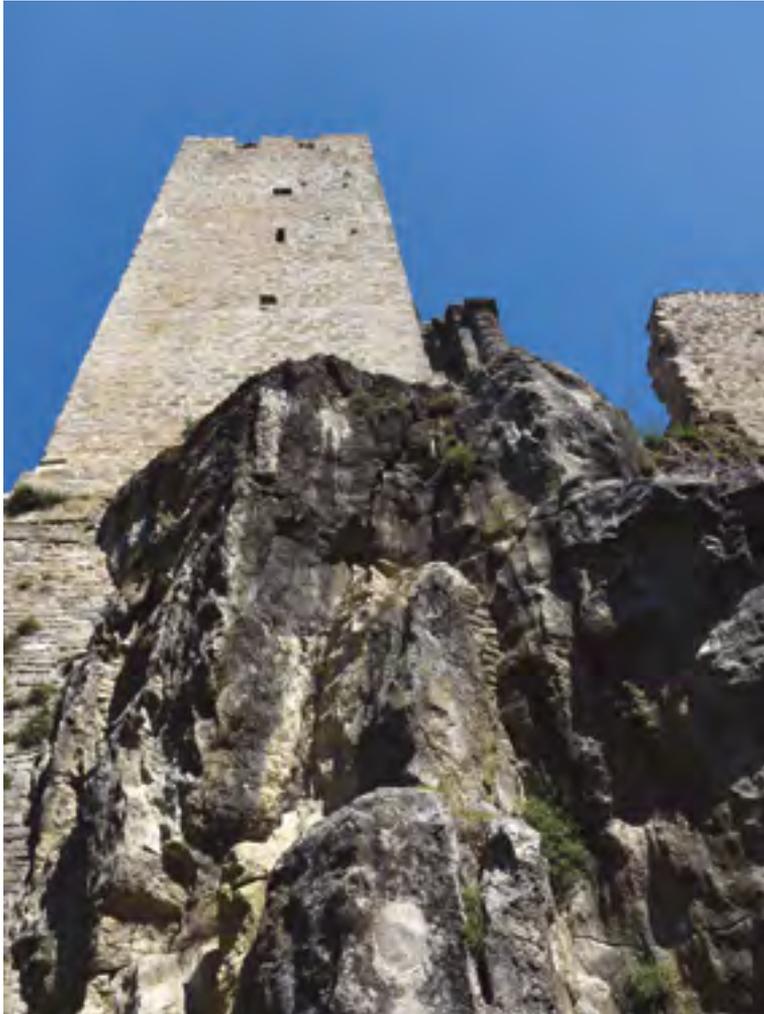




Momjan







Life in the Ambience of European Middle Ages

In the north of Istria, the ruins of the once grandiose Momjan Castle rise up above the Argilla stream. The fort constructed in the first half of the thirteenth century on the bedrock bounded by cliffs at 280 metres above sea level is one of the most picturesque symbols of medieval Istria. Throughout history, the exceptional defensive and strategic position of Momjan Castle enabled control of the nearby roads and the rich wine-growing area. Yet, life in Momjan, a settlement below the castle, had not always lived under the benign shadow of this impressive fortification monument.



Fort Built Under the Auspices of the Church of Aquileia

The first written record of Momjan dates back to 1035, the year when Conrad II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, issued a public charter mentioning this place as the property of St. Michael's monastery in Vizinada by Buje. During the 11th century, however, the jurisdiction over this unfortified settlement – thus a “village” in the medieval sense of urbanity – passes into the hands of the Weimar-Orlamünde family whose offspring, Count Ulrich II, donates the entire property to the Church of Aquileia in 1102.



In this way began the centuries-old reign of the Patriarchate of Aquileia over Momjan, and it is precisely under the aegis of this unique ecclesiastical principality that Momjan Castle will rise, a monument whose remains still evoke the atmosphere of the European Middle Ages. Also, under the shadow of the Aquileian Church, the first noble house will emerge that will name itself precisely after this fortress. The primogenitor of House Momjan was a Woscalus, a member of the family that ruled over Duino north of Trieste and a knight in the service of the Church of Aquileia and its advocates, the Counts of Gorizia.

Subsequent generations of House Momjan, however, shifted their loyalties like chameleons, first supporting the patriarchs, then the Counts of Gorizia, and finally Venice. Such a policy resulted in an uncertain period of the 14th century in which the jurisdiction over the fort and the fortified settlement changed rapidly. In the end, in 1312, the power over Momjan finally passed completely into the hands of Count Henry II of Gorizia.

Ravage of the Castle Was not Fatal

It is precisely during the period of subjection to the Counts of Gorizia that Momjan suffered its darkest moment, a shock from which it would never fully recuperate. Namely, in 1343 a war erupted between Venice and Count Albert III of Gorizia. In this brief skirmish, the offspring of House Gorizia emerged as an undisputed loser: Albert III had to personally come to Venice and bow his head before the doge as he accepted the peace treaty with the Most Serene Queen of the Adriatic. Among other things, the Count of Gorizia was forced to raze the castle and all the fortifications in Momjan. It was one of the hardest blows for Momjan Castle, luckily not a fatal one.



With the death of Count Albert III in 1374, all Istrian estates of House Gorizia pass into the hands of the dukes of Austria from the Habsburg dynasty by way of an inheritance contract. It was precisely in the 15th century, during the Habsburg reign over Momjan, that the place was again mentioned as a *castrum* in primary sources, confirming that the life of Momjan castle was not over with the 1344 peace treaty. Identical to the period of Gorizian rule, the Habsburgs did not incorporate Momjan into the framework of the County of Pazin, but instead ran the estate as a separate manor that they would lease or pledge to their loyal knights.

One such noble family was House Raunacher whose offspring ruled over Momjan in the name of the Habsburgs at the beginning of the 16th century. During this period, a fateful war broke out between Venice and the so-called League of Cambrai, also led by Emperor Maximilian I Habsburg. The flame of war flared up particularly quickly in Istria, a region divided between Venetian and Austrian jurisdictions. Momjan was no exception: in 1508, Venetian troops occupied the castle and annexed it to the Republic of St. Mark. For Momjan, thus officially began the era of Venice.

Simone de Rota Bought the Castle for 5,555 Golden Ducats

Even though originally subjected to the Commune of Piran, Momjan was to return under the jurisdiction of the Raunachers following the arbitral sentence of Trento of 1535, but under the condition that Venice retains criminal justice and appellate jurisdictions in civil cases. In other words, the jurisdiction of House Raunacher was just a dead

letter. Although they at first tried to exercise their authority and rule over Momjan, the Raunachers eventually gave up sharing power with Venice and decided to sell all their rights of the estate of Momjan. In January of 1548, a contract of sale was concluded with Simon de Rota, a nobleman from the prominent dynasty of Bergamo who bought the castle and all the jurisdictional rights over Momjan from the Raunacher brothers for 5,555 golden ducats.

The Rota family would rule over Momjan until the mid-19th century and it was precisely during the first phase of their administration (the second half of the 16th century) that Momjan Castle would experience a renaissance, assuming the form recognizable to this day. The renovation wave that swept Momjan under the rule of Simon I Rota includes the works on the entrance portal, the imposing tower that still dominates the landscape, the walls and, most importantly, a four-storey residential area (palas).

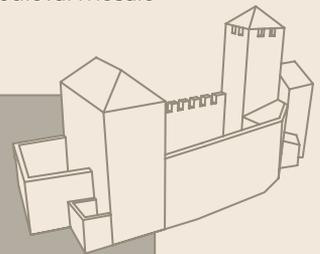
Momjan Castle would serve as the residence of House Rota until 1835, the year when it was finally abandoned. From then on begins the steep decline of this once imposing medieval fortress that lost both its strategic and residential functions.



A New Life of the Stone Guardian of Fertile Lowlands

Luckily, this centuries-long decline of the once proud guardian of the fertile wine-bearing fields of north-western Istria has stopped. The remains of the castle preserved to this day are being renovated through publicly funded projects, slowly restoring the old splendour to this distinctive symbol of Istrian Middle Ages. Moreover, the fact that the House of Castles will be located precisely in Momjan adds a new importance to the place, a fort that was one of the most precious stones of the Istrian medieval mosaic in its centuries of grandeur.

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Završje







The Castle Given to the Bride as a Wedding Gift

The castle in the dreamy Završje renowned for its compelling past entered history as a wedding gift. In 1292, in the presence and with the consent of his lord, Count Albert I of Gorizia, knight Ulrich III of Rihemberk donated Završje Castle with all its dependencies to his wife Kunigund of Vilalta. According to medieval German customary law system, this type of marital gift, the so-called morning gift (orig. Germ. *Morgengabe*), was given by a groom to his bride following their first wedding night. With this intimate document, one that so vividly reflects the rich cultural heritage of medieval Istria, Završje officially enters history as this is also the very first written record of this notable Istrian castle.

Key Link in a Three-Member Chain of Castles

Occupying a prominent strategic position at the top of a 250-meter-high hill, Završje, along with neighbouring Grožnjan to the west and Oprtalj to the east, formed a key link in a three-member chain of castles that controlled important roads and the northern valley of the River Mirna. Moreover, numerous archaeological finds confirm that the site was inhabited in prehistory and during Roman antiquity due to its position. However, the fortress itself was, by all accounts, erected only in the 13th century.

In an earlier period, historical records mention only the neighbouring village of Kostanjica that Count Ulrich II Weimar-Orlamünde donated to



the Aquileian Church in 1102. At some moment, the entire area passes into the hands of the Counts of Gorizia who, in the second half of the 13th century, leave it in the hands of their faithful knights from House Rihemberk. From this period onwards, the fate of Završje largely follows the general historical trajectory of Momjan. From the 14th century stem the first registered disputes with the neighbouring Motovun, at the time already a Venetian castle, regarding the usufruct rights over the rich forest resources of Motovun Forest.

Disputes about Motovun Forest

Traces of disputes between Završje and Motovun regarding the usufruct rights over Motovun Forest go back to the 14th century. Eventually, the very name of the present-day forest the people of Motovun take so much pride in hides the historical winner of this centuries-long conflict.





The Arena of Conflict Between Venice and the Habsburgs

Following the death of Count Albert III of Gorizia in 1374, all the Istrian possessions of House Gorizia, including Završje, come under the direct jurisdiction of the Austrian (arch)dukes. It is precisely during the age of the Habsburg dominion that the castle assumes the physiognomy by which it is recognizable to this day. The double walls that once surrounded the entire town probably date from the same period as well. During this age, the captaincy with its centre in Završje extended south of the River Mirna, including Vižinada and Labinci under its jurisdiction.

As a border area, Završje was one of the main sites of conflict between the Venetian Republic and the Habsburgs that was waged in the second half of the 15th and early 16th century. In one such bloody episode during the War of the League of Cambrai against Venice, the Venetian troops occupied Završje twice, first temporarily in 1508, and then permanently in 1511 when the town walls were symbolically razed as well. In this way, in the destructive flame of warfare, began the centuries-long Venetian era in Završje.

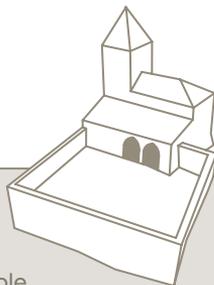
Shortly after its conquest, the Republic of St. Mark auctioned the jurisdiction over Završje, finally selling this picturesque lordship in 1530 to Venetian noblemen Giustian Contarini and Girolamo Grimani for 7500 ducats. The duo then divided between themselves the former Captainate, with Grimani getting Vižinada and Contarini Završje. It is precisely this Venetian family, whose coat of arms has decorated the interior of the castle to this day, that will rule over Završje throughout the Early Modern period.

A modest lordship that had lost its original strategic value of a border fortress, Završje stagnated as the population numbers slowly dwindled.



Bright Cinematic Future

Today, however, this castle is experiencing a renaissance of sorts in a completely different context, unimaginable in the age of the Rihemberks, the Gorizians or the Contarinis. Namely, Završje emerged as a globally attractive filming location; the 2017 version of Robin Hood directed by Otto Bathurst was, to name but one example, filmed here. Moreover, a vote conducted in 2020 by the European Film Commissions Network (EUFCN) in collaboration with the film portal Cineuropa named Završje the second-best European filming location. By replacing military captains with film directors and armed garrisons with film crews, Završje has successfully transformed into a compelling European filming location, securing for itself a bright and, above all, exciting future.



It is during the age of the Habsburg dominion that the castle assumes the physiognomy by which Završje is recognizable to this day, with the double walls that once surrounded the entire town probably dating from the same period.



Motovun





A Magical Medieval Vista Known All Over the World

In the middle of the fertile lowlands of the River Mirna, on a hill 277 meters above sea level rises Motovun. This zealous guardian of fertile fields and rich forests has been amazing with its distinctive view from the Middle Ages to the present day.



A City Where the Bishops Never Managed to Impose Their Rule

Motovun's first mention in written historical sources stems from the famous record of a court case at the Rižana River from 804. On that occasion, the Istrian landowners and members of the elite urban strata vividly presented a series of complaints regarding the newly introduced Frankish administration embodied by the delegated Duke John, sadly remembering the "good old days" when the region had been under the Eastern Roman Empire, that is, Byzantium.

The integration of Istria into the Holy Roman Empire and the rise of the secular power of the Church, especially of the Aquileian patriarchs and the bishops of Poreč, had a profound effect on Motovun. Namely, the bishops of Poreč, referring to the grant of Emperor Otto II from 983 in which Motovun is explicitly mentioned, sought to establish both secular and ecclesiastical authority over this castle and the rich appertaining district. They achieved only partial success in this quest: although Motovun remained under the ecclesiastical authority of the Diocese of Poreč, which had the right to collect tithes, the bishops never succeeded in establishing secular dominion over this castle.





Venice's Important Spoil of War

During the 13th century, Motovun grows into one of the most strategically important castles of continental Istria. In this period, the patriarchs of Aquileia, the Counts of Gorizia, and their prominent knights tried to establish their power in Motovun. However, at the same time, an urban commune is created in Motovun, uniting the more respectable population and taking over the lion's share of jurisdiction through municipal councils and elected administrative functions. Nevertheless, Motovun, like all the other medieval Istrian communes, was too small to fend off potentates such as the Counts of Gorizia, the patriarchs of Aquileia and Venice, three forces that longed for power over this strategic possession.

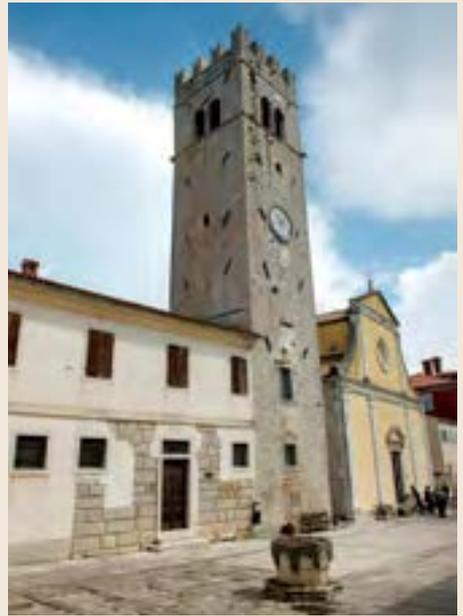
The fateful period of turmoil for Motovun began with the outbreak of the conflict between Patriarch Gregory of Montelongo and Count Albert I of Gorizia, when Motovun at least temporarily sided with Albert I of Gorizia. However, in 1276, after a large part of the Istrian coastal towns had surrendered to Venice, Motovun also sent its "application form" to the Venetian Republic. Although Venice immediately accepted Motovun into its growing state, in the same 1276 the power over this castle was restored by Aquileian Patriarch Raymond della Torre. The next two years were certainly turbulent and uncertain for Motovun, but in 1278 the representatives of the city again surrendered their town to Venice, finally overthrowing the administration of the Church of Aquileia and its hereditary advocates. In the bloody war that ensued between Venice, the Counts of Gorizia and Patriarch Raymond, the Most Serene Republic of St. Mark emerged as the undisputed winner, and power over Motovun was one of the more prominent war trophies.



From the fateful 1278 until the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797, Motovun developed under the shade of Venice. Aware of the strategic importance and economic potential of this castle, Venice invested in Motovun, elevating it to one of the most representative centres of continental Istria. Due to its position in the very epicentre of Istrian border, on the boundary with Gorizian Pazin and Završje and Aquileian Buzet and Oprtalj, Motovun during the 14th and 15th centuries was a double-walled castle of distinct military-defensive function, expected to be ready at any time to defend its own and the Venetian rights over the rich natural resources that had to be conscientiously exploited for the needs of the local population, but also for the needs of the Venetian arsenal. The fact that to this day there is talk of Motovun Forest – which still breathes with full lungs at the foot of the castle – shows how successful Motovun and Venice were in this endeavour.

Fortified by strong walls, with a representative loggia, a tower, a podestà's palace and a mechanical clock on the main square, Motovun emerged in the early modern times as one of the richest communes in Venetian Istria. In the mid-17th century, Giacomo Filippo Tomasini, the bishop of Novigrad, described this castle as the most beautiful place in the entire province with the most fertile district.

Although the gradual decline of Venice had a negative effect on the whole of Venetian Istria, including Motovun, the castle was never neglected. In 1658, the walls, the palace and the tower were renovated under Venetian patronage, thus preserving the splendour of this medieval pearl, a historical lustre that Motovun has not lost to this day.



The Famous Motovun Film Festival

As one of the most famous tourist attractions in Istria, the castle is today globally recognizable for its magical vista and gastro-oenological offer, whose specialty are truffles from Motovun Forest. Also, Motovun has been the centre of the famous Motovun Film Festival for decades, an event that transformed this medieval military-strategic castle into a world-famous cultural centre of modern-day Istria.

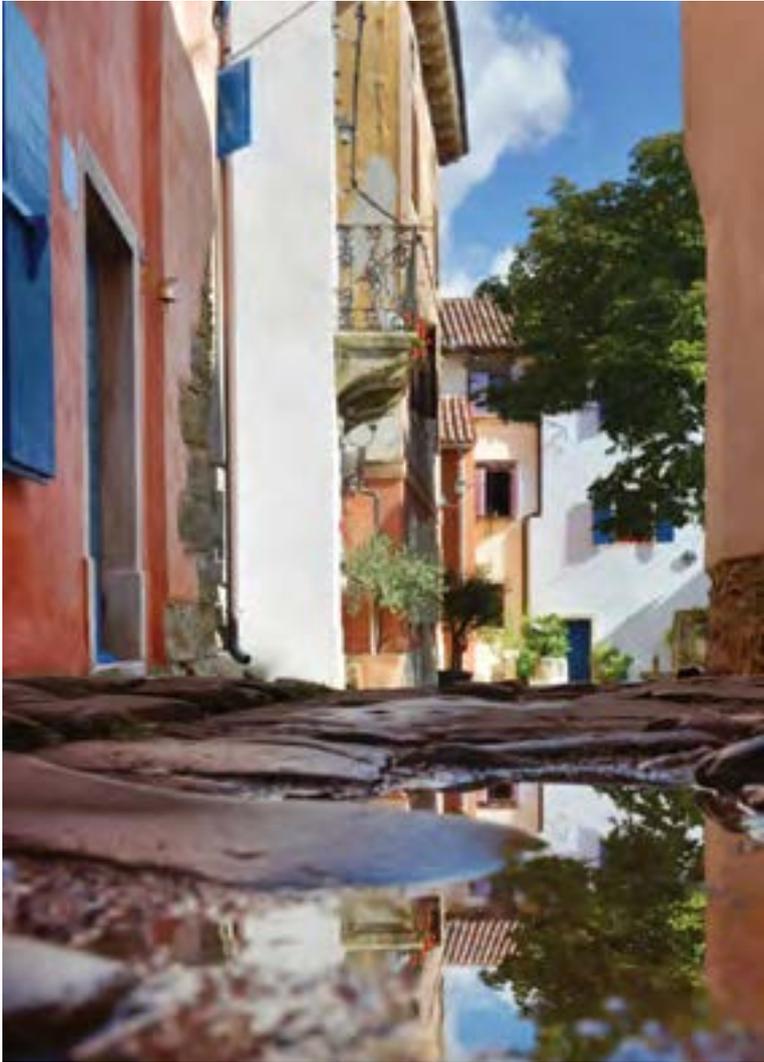
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Grožnjan







The Once Mighty Guardian of the Fertile Valley of the River Mirna is Today's City of Artists

South of Momjan, a heartbeat away from Buje, overlooking the fertile valleys of the River Mirna from the strategic security of the hill at 288 meters of altitude, is Grožnjan, a fortified town of unique cultural and historical character.



Donation for the Salvation of the Soul – Birth Certificate of the Castle

The documented history of this distinctive place dates back to the period of the 11th- and 12th-century Istrian march. The first historically established owner of Grožnjan was Count Ulrich II Weimar-Orlamünde who donated twenty-one of his possessions via a pious gift to the Aquileian Church, among which the *castrum Grisiniana* – this donation is also Grožnjan's "birth certificate".

In this historical period, the fate of Grožnjan is closely tied to Petrapilosa. These Aquileian estates were managed by the same knightly family who appears in the 13th-century historical sources as House Petrapilosa-Grožnjan. The last documented ruler of Grožnjan from House Petrapilosa was Peter, a knight who died in the first half of the 14th century, leaving behind the underage son Nicholas who, by all accounts, never managed to rule over his ancestral lands. It is during this period of regency that the town begins to be managed by various noblemen until it is finally taken over, in the 1350s, by the belligerent Ulrich V of Rihemberk, a knight in the service of the Counts of Gorizia who will forever change Grožnjan's course of history.



Military and Defence Centre of Venetian Istria

After a turbulent military career fighting now against and now for Venice, in 1355 Ulrich decided that hard cash meant more to him than his possessions in Istria. Therefore, he opened negotiations with the Republic of Venice which officially ended in 1358 when the ownership of Grožnjan was pledged for four thousand ducats. Since House Rihemberk never repaid their loan, Grožnjan remained under Venetian jurisdiction until the very end of the Republic of St. Mark in 1797. Thus began the Venetian era in Grožnjan, the period in which the town assumes the contours for which it is known to this very day.

Immediately following the Venetian takeover, Grožnjan was transformed into the military-defensive centre of Venetian Istria helmed by a captain responsible for the safety of Istrian possessions to the north of the River Mirna. The military character of Grožnjan dominated the town until the very end of the 14th century when Rašpor took over this function. Nevertheless, as a territory that bordered Aquileian and Gorizian, that is, Austrian territories on practically all sides, Grožnjan remained a fortified town of primarily military nature throughout the entire medieval period of Venetian rule.





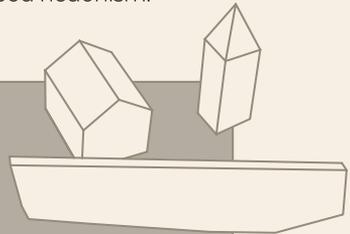
Even after the Venetian takeover of the Patriarchate of Aquileia (1421), Grožnjan remained a frontier commune that bordered the Captainate of Završje to the east, a possession under the rule of Austrian (arch)dukes. In numerous small- and large-scale conflicts between Venice and House Habsburg which blazed across the Istrian peninsula in an almost regular rhythm, Grožnjan was regularly sentenced to service in the first front. The most difficult period for the town was definitely the 17th century during which the destructive Uskok War decimated the larger part of the region, including Grožnjan. Combined with frequent outbreaks of deadly infectious diseases, Grožnjan entered the modern age as a pale shadow of the once powerful guardian of the fertile valleys of the Mirna.



Cultural and Artistic Bastion of the Peninsula

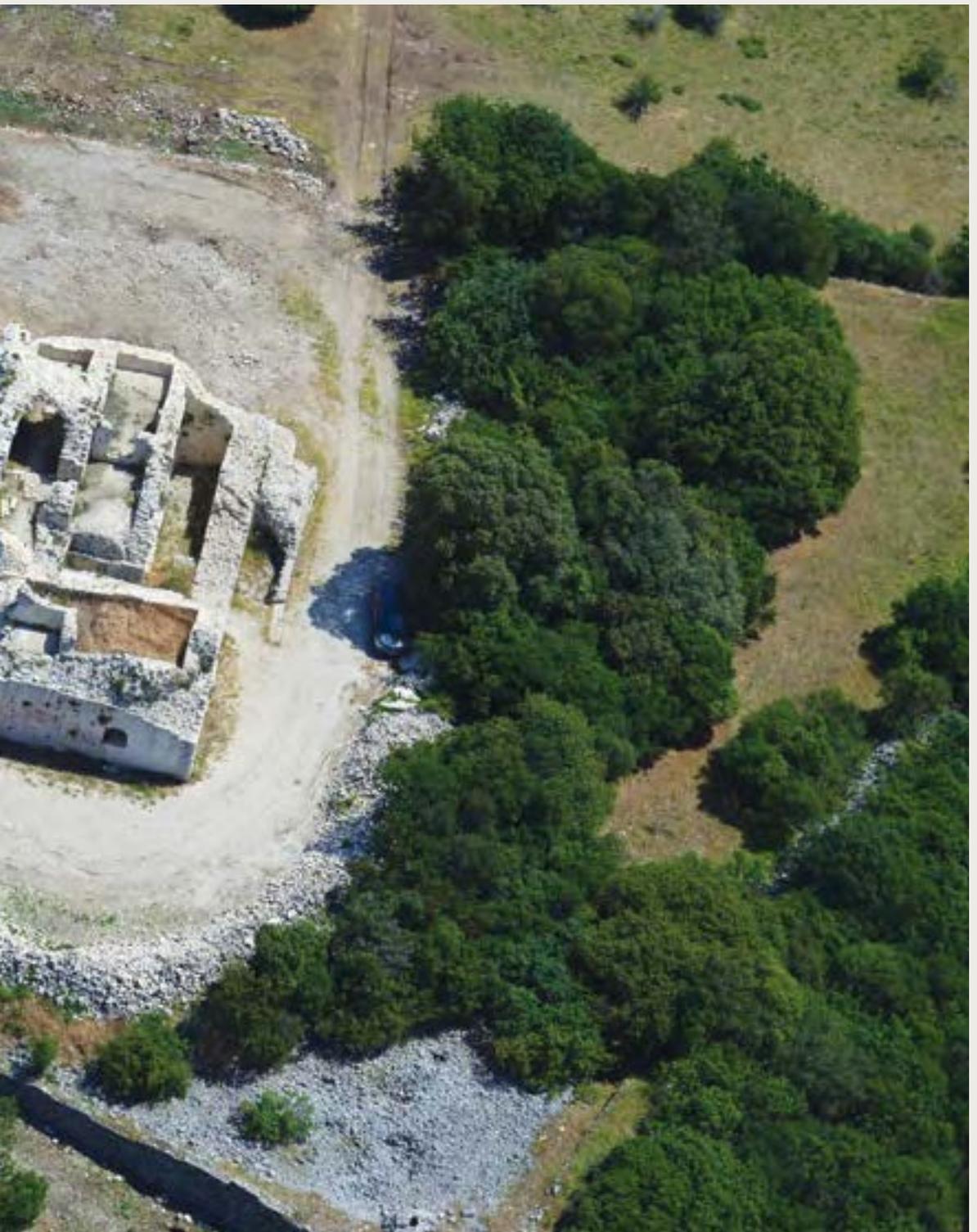
Despite everything, this walled hill-top centre has preserved population continuity since the medieval period. More recently, Grožnjan managed to completely transform itself into a wholly new centre of the Istrian peninsula. Resolutely casting away its antiquated, worn-out military attire, Grožnjan rose as an undisputed cultural and artistic bastion of Istria. Since the mid-1960s, Grožnjan has been home to numerous art ateliers and galleries and hence its name the City of Artists. Grožnjan also houses the headquarters of the International Cultural Centre of Jeunesses Musicales Croatia, as well as numerous art galleries, summer workshops and art schools and festivals attracting artists from all parts of the world, which transformed this small, picturesque town from a rusted link in the military-defence chain into a city of culture, serenity, and wine and food hedonism.

Ulrich V of Rihemberk, a knight in the service of the Counts of Gorizia, in 1358 pledged the ownership of Grožnjan for four thousand ducats after negotiations with the Republic of Venice. Since House Rihemberk never repaid its debt, Grožnjan remained under Venetian rule until the very end of the Republic of St. Mark in 1797.





Turnina





A Distinctive Story of the Once Important Guardian of Rovinj

On a hill not far from Rovinj, only four kilometres east of the city walls, rises the castle of Turnina, once an imposing guardian of the picturesque and rich Istrian town. The oldest history of this Rovinj's castle can be read from the archaeological remains that tell a truly special story.



One of the Oldest Istrian Medieval Castles

Turnina is one of the oldest Istrian medieval castles, apparently built in the 9th century, during the Carolingian reign, while Istria was part of the Frankish, that is, restored Roman Empire. The castle was deliberately built on a strategically important place from which it controlled access to the Istrian coast, that is Rovinj, from the interior of the Peninsula. With newly founded monasteries, such as that of St. Marija near the neighbouring Bale, Turnina is an example of a well-established Carolingian practice of controlling the region through a network of military-defensive and ecclesiastical edifices.

The fate of Turnina after the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire is not known, but it is very likely that the castle remained in the direct ownership of the holders of public authority – delegated dukes and counts – until the beginning of the 12th century. In 1102, at the same time as Count Ulrich II of Weimar and Orlamünde handed over the vast majority of his hereditary estates in Istria to the Church of Aquileia, Duke Henry, brother of the Aquileian Patriarch Ulrich, also issued a grant for the redemption of

his soul to the same church. With this donation, Henry Eppenstein, Duke of Carinthia, a duchy that at the time included the Margraviate of Istria as well, handed over to his brother and the Church of Aquileia his castle located in Istria, in a place called *Ruvoyñ*. According to the latest research, this toponym refers to Rovinj, and the castle that the duke hands over to the Patriarchate of Aquileia should be none other than Turnina. Both grants, Ulrich's and Henry's, were motivated by the desire to create an administrative centre in the Patriarchate of Aquileia, the main bastion of the pro-imperial side in the midst of the war between the empire and the papacy, from which the whole or at least the main part of the Istrian peninsula would be ruled over. In this way, the era of the dominion of Aquileian patriarchs began in Turnina as well.

Constantly at the Centre of Turbulent War Conflicts

As the property of the Church of Aquileia, Turnina shared the fate of other Istrian castles, which were often involved in wars between the patriarchs, their hereditary advocates, the Counts of Gorizia, and Venice. Thus, during the conflict between Patriarch Gregory of Montelongo and Count Albert I of Gorizia, Turnina was protected by the Venetian mercenary Albertino Morosini, who fought on the side of the Aquileian prelate. However, at the time when Rovinj surrendered to the rule of the Venetian Republic in 1283, the status of Turnina became uncertain. On the one hand, the crippled Aquileian patriarchs handed over the administration of this defender of Rovinj to the powerful noble Castropola family that ruled over Pula. On the other hand, Venice did not want to share the administration of Rovinj's district, especially not a strategically important castle like Turnina, with Aquileian patriarchs with whom there were often armed conflicts.

The last straw was the outbreak of conflict between Venice and the Castropola family over the dominion over Pula, a city that had surrendered to the Venetian Republic in 1331. In that conflict, Venice annexed many estates of House Castropola, including Turnina. Although it is questionable to what extent the Castropolas had rights over Turnina between 1283 and 1331 and what powers over this castle (if any) were in the hands of the bishops of Pula, to whom Venice recognized some undefined rights, for this castle the Venetian era certainly begins from the mid-14th century.

Unfortunately, not even the Venetian era brought a longer period of peace to Turnina. In the conflict that broke out between Venice and the anti-Venetian coalition, during the so-called War for Chioggia (1378–1381), Turnina was conquered by the combined Genoese-Aquileian forces. However, in the Venetian counterattack which soon followed, Venice successfully regained all lost possessions in Istria, including Turnina. This is also the last known written testimony of medieval Turnina. It is very likely that the castle suffered serious damage during that war from which it never fully recovered.



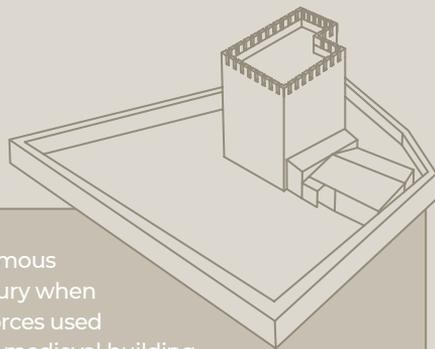


In the Early Modern Period, Just a Neglected Relic of the Past

During the modern period, Turnina Castle completely lost its former strategic role as it was not located near the turbulent Veneto-Austrian border. As such, the fort survived the wars between Venice and the Habsburgs that erupted throughout Istria in the 16th and 17th centuries, but at that time Turnina was only a crippled, neglected relic of the past without its former medieval splendour.

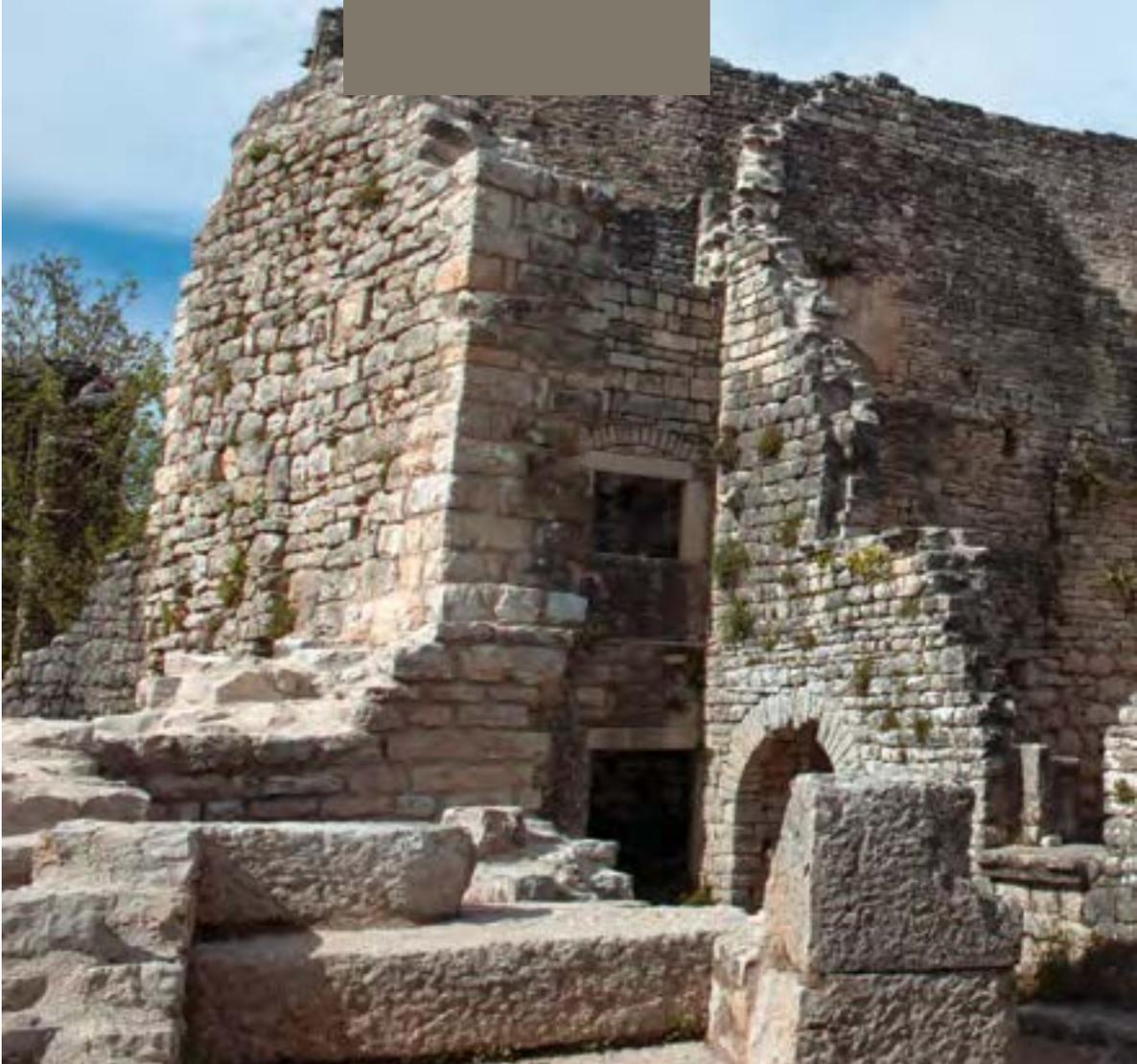
Turnina experienced its infamous demise in the mid-20th century when warring partisan and Nazi forces used the façade of this neglected medieval building as a space for their propaganda: first a large five-pointed star was drawn, then a Nazi swastika, and finally a communist symbol again. The Nazis responded to this second insult by blowing up the castle with dynamite. It was the greatest destruction that this castle experienced and from which it has not recovered to this day.

Still, Turnina's future is bright. In step with the historical development of Rovinj, which in the 21st century became a globally attractive tourist destination, Turnina is entering a phase of renovation that will once again clothe this Carolingian castle in a more monumental attire a historical protector of Rovinj certainly deserves.



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Dvigrad





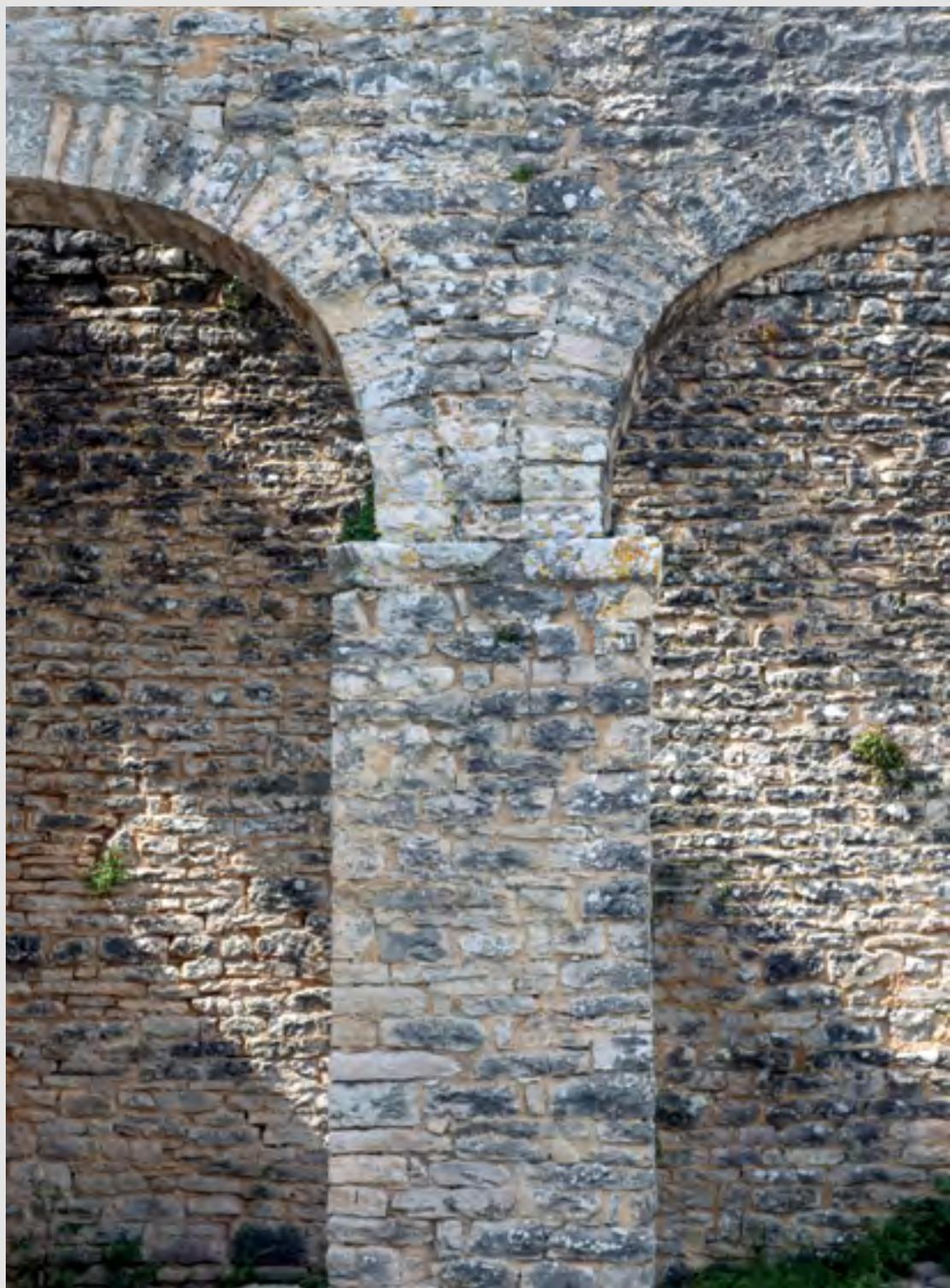


The Ruins Hiding the Story of an Important and Lively Fortified City

Macabre is the present-day sight of Dvigrad, the dead medieval Istrian town whose lone skeleton rises along the eastern landscape of Lim Bay, eerily evoking the ancient glory of a once lively, important, and prosperous fortified settlement.

Two Castles Merged Into a Unique Centre

Emerging in the early medieval era on the strategically important hilltop from which the traffic of Lim Bay and roads connecting the centre of Istria to the shore were controlled, in its heyday, Dvigrad was an urban centre populated by roughly one thousand inhabitants whose ownership was fought over by some of the most powerful regional lords. The fortified settlement was created, as its very name reveals, by the merging of two forts – Monkaštel to the northwest and Parentin Castle to the southeast – into a unique centre surrounded by walls. The entire estate was originally divided between the bishops of Poreč and the patriarchs of Aquileia, but in the long, drawn-out conflict between the two jurisdiction holders over the ownership of this important guardian of Lim Bay, it was the Aquileian Church that emerged victorious. However, due to its strategic value, the Counts of Gorizia, the offspring of the Lords of Pula from House Castropola, and even the nearby Mistress of the Adriatic, Venice, all interfered in the administration of Dvigrad during the Middle Ages.





Changing Rulers and Protectors

It cannot be determined when exactly and why Parentin Castle was abandoned, but from the Late Middle Ages onwards life in Dvigrad concentrated exclusively around Monkaštel, even though the name *Duo Castra* continued to be used. Despite the reduction of its original scope, Dvigrad developed into a modest commune during the Aquileian period, mimicking the administrative structures and practices of nearby towns such as Bale. Thus, during the years of crisis of the Patriarchate of Aquileia that nearly paralyzed the state organs of this unstable ecclesiastical principality, Dvigrad independently placed itself under the rule and protection of Hugh VIII of Duino, at the time the most powerful regional lord and the captain of the nearby County of Pazin.



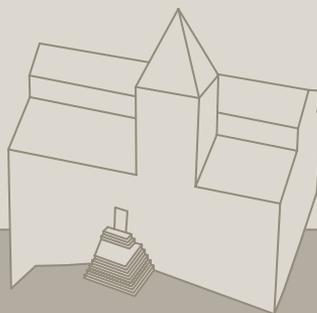
By all accounts, Hugh's death and the end of House Duino brought Dvigrad back under the auspices of the Aquileian Church, but not for long. The conflict that broke out between Venice and Sigismund of Luxembourg, the Hungarian-Croatian king, later emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, divided the rulers of the Patriarchate of Aquileia into pro-Hungarian and pro-Venetian factions, the latter of which ruled over Dvigrad. As Venice sent a military garrison to defend the town from a potential enemy attack in 1411, Dvigrad unofficially became part of the Venetian Republic. Doge Tommaso Mocenigo would officially confirm this development in 1414, placing Dvigrad under the administration of the Commune of Koper whose nobles would serve as rectors of this town until the end of the 18th century. Immediately after the transition to the rule of Venice, the statute of Dvigrad was codified, a collection of local law according to which the community was governed deep into the modern period.



War, Malaria and Death of the City

Unfortunately for the local population, Venetian administration did not usher in a longer period of prosperity. Periodic conflicts between Venice and House Habsburg decimated a large part of Early Modern Istria, especially the frontier territories such as Dvigrad. The destruction of the largest scale occurred in this town in the beginning of the 17th century in the midst of the Uskok War after which it never recuperated. In addition to all these misfortunes, Dvigrad was also swept by several destructive waves of deadly infectious diseases and, from the 17th century onwards, the authors also mention “bad air,” that is, malaria, as a significant depopulation factor. All these determinants led to the complete abandonment of the town in the mid-17th century whose population moved to the neighbouring village of Kanfanar. Thus died Dvigrad, the once powerful guardian of Lim Bay.

Today, almost four centuries after its death, Dvigrad has the opportunity to be resurrected in a new guise, as a tourist attraction in the heart of Istria that can uniquely evoke the long-bygone centuries of the Middle Ages, the era of the town’s greatest splendour.



After several waves of infectious diseases that swept Dvigrad, from the 17th century onwards, historical records also mention “bad air”, that is, malaria as a significant depopulation factor. In the mid-17th century, the castle is completely abandoned, and the population moved to the neighbouring village of Kanfanar.

Pazin







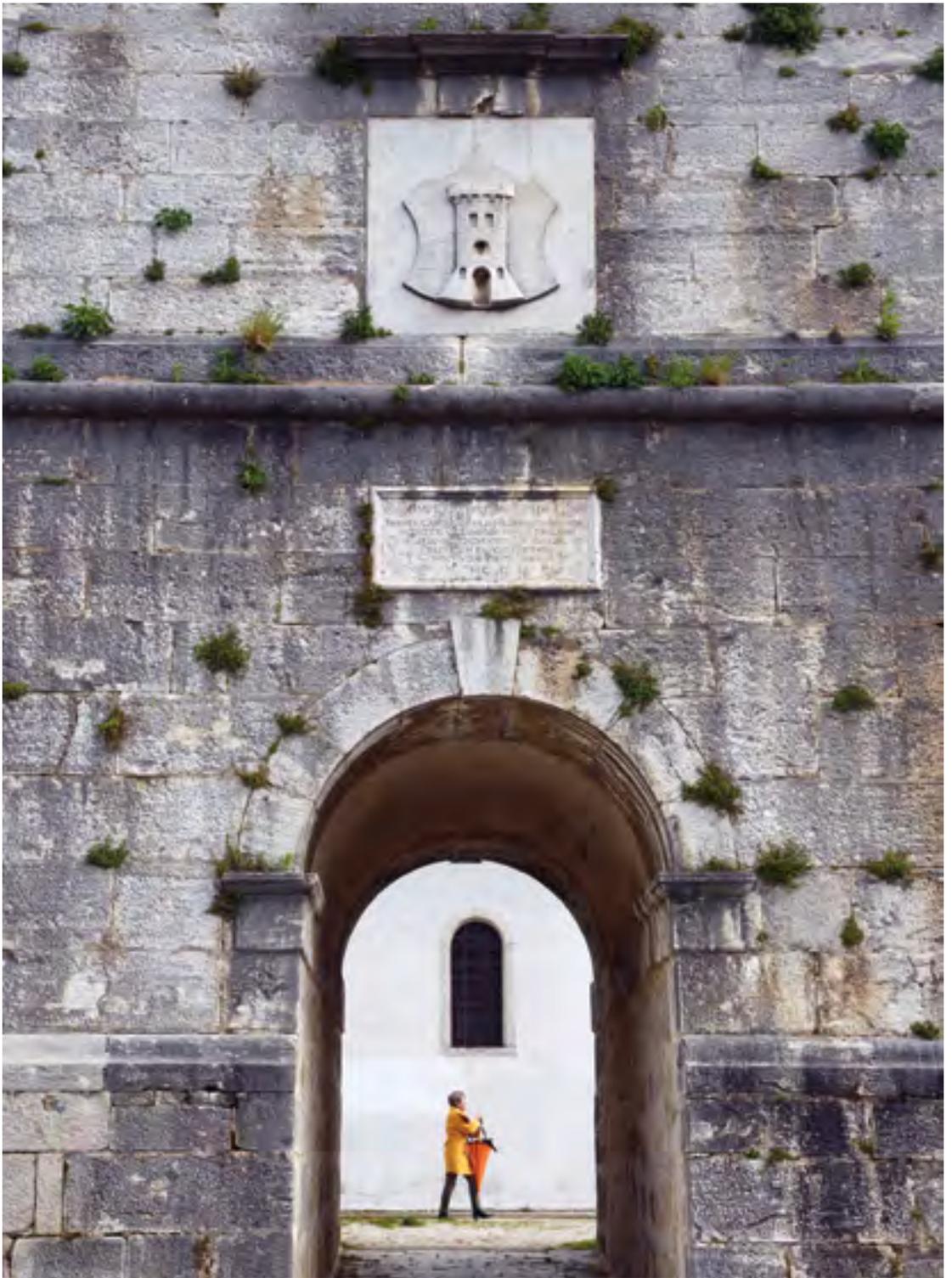
The Castle as the Stronghold of the Mighty Ones

Located at the impressive strategic position above Pazin Cave and the River Pazinčica at an altitude of 361 meters, Pazin Castle dominates its landscape as one of the most impressive fortification monuments of Istrian Middle Ages.

The castle enters the Middle Ages as a temporal possession of the Church of Poreč. In fact, on 7 June 983, Otto II, Holy Roman Emperor, issued in Verona an official diploma to Adam, the Bishop of Poreč, confirming the jurisdictions and lands of his bishopric. It is precisely among these possessions that the first historical record of Pazin is hidden.

Undisputed Centre of the Counts of Gorizia in Istria

The jurisdictions over the castle and the settlement that developed below it, the so-called Stari Pazin (Old Pazin in literal translation), were originally divided between the bishops of Poreč and the patriarchs of Aquileia. However, already in the 11th century the actual power over the entire complex concentrated in the hands of a prominent noble family named after their estates in Istria and Carniola: House Črnigrad-Šumberk. The primogenitor of this dynasty, Count Meinhard, was related to the ruling patriarch of Aquileia, and he served as the advocate of the Bishopric of Poreč at the same time. It was precisely these circumstances that enabled him to rule over Pazin unimpeded and lay the foundations of the lordship from which the County of Pazin would later develop.





Shortly after Meinhard's death, the only living heir of House Črni-grad-Šumberk remained his daughter Mathilda, "the countess of Pazin," who married a much older but extremely powerful widower, Count Engelbert III of Gorizia. Through this strategic marriage to a rich Istrian heiress, House Gorizia opened wide its door for expansion over the entire Istrian peninsula. Among others, the Counts of Gorizia thus became the hereditary advocates of the Church of Poreč and the lords of Pazin, forever changing the course of the history of Istria and of this seminal castle.

Until 1374, the offspring of the Gorizia family ruled over their possessions in Istria precisely from Pazin, the centre of their regional administration. The fact that it was Pazin Castle that was chosen as the personal residence of the Counts of Gorizia markedly influenced the further development of this town. Assuming the role of the undisputed centre of Gorizian Istria, Pazin maintained its central position even after the dying out of the Istrian branch of House Gorizia in 1374.





Mighty Symbol of the Habsburg Istria

Under the Habsburg rule, the castle continued its life as the unassailable symbol of the supreme representatives of Austrian (arch)dukes in Istria, the captains of the County of Pazin. All of this contributed to the monumentalization of Pazin Castle, a monument that besides its military-strategic functions had to mirror a certain symbolic importance as the seat of the highest representatives of supreme authorities. Among all the notable families that ruled over Pazin as the captains of the eponymous county, House Mosconi left the most significant mark on the castle itself which assumed its current contours largely during the period of their rule (1532–1558).

Pazin was briefly conquered in 1508 when the Venetian army occupied the entire Austrian Istria up to Rijeka in a kind of blitzkrieg. Soon thereafter, however, Venice was forced to abandon the largest part of the newly occupied territories due to warfare on other battlefronts. Pazin thus returned under the jurisdiction of the Habsburgs under whose sceptre it remained until the 17th century when the Austrian archdukes decided to sell off the largest part of their rights over the entire County. The final buyer of Pazin and the associated county was Antonio Montecuccoli, a count from Modena who purchased it in 1766 and whose family would rule over this estate until 1848.



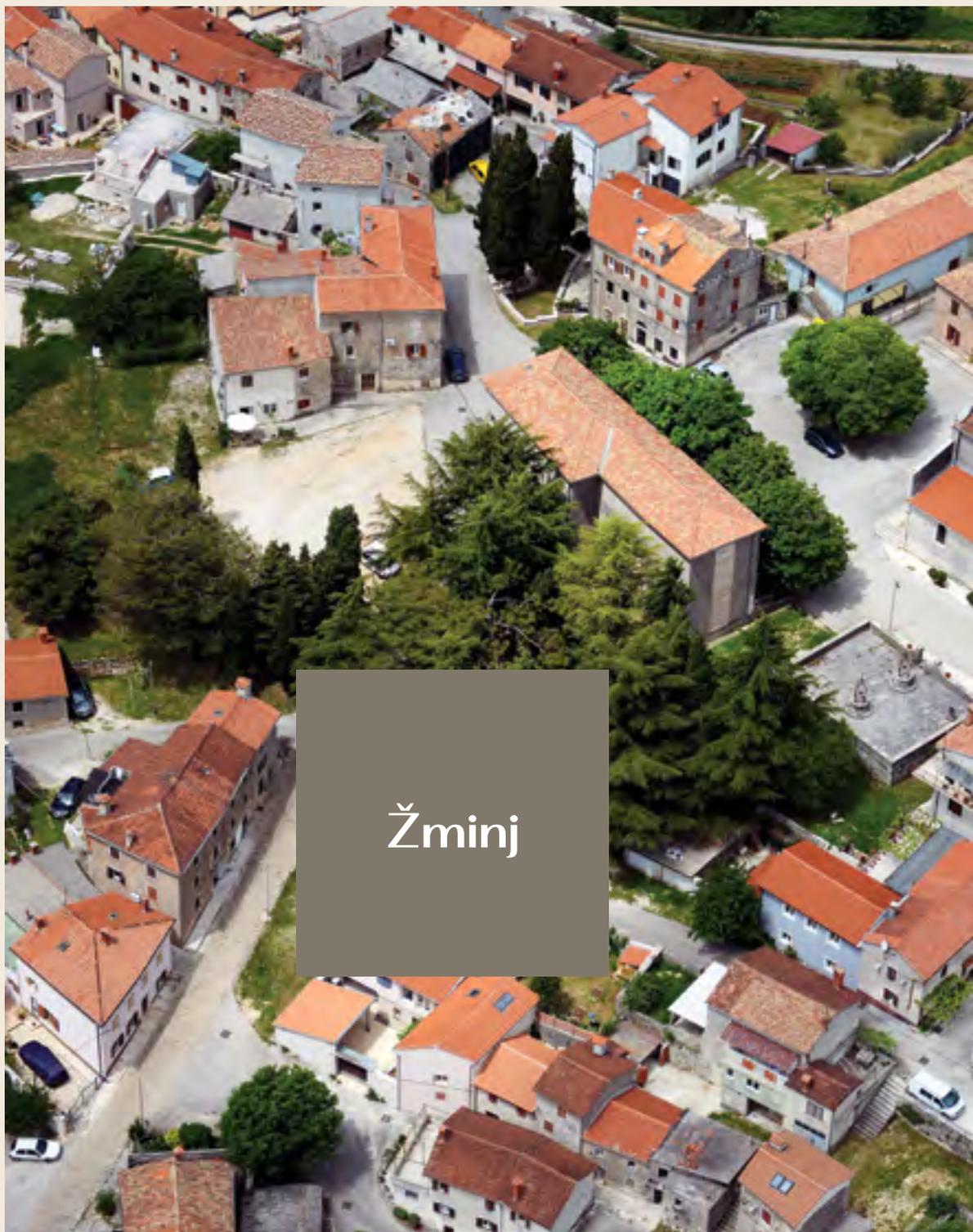
Veduta of Pazin, 17th century, source: Johann Weichard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain* (Nurnemberg 1689), Vol. 3

One of the Best-Preserved Medieval Forts

Today, Pazin is one of the administrative centres of the Region of Istria, thus mirroring its historical role as one of the principal cities of medieval Istria. The castle, the symbol of Gorizian and later Austrian Istria, remains one of the best-preserved medieval fortifications of the Peninsula, housing the Ethnographic Museum of Istria and the Museum of the City of Pazin in its premises.

Uprisings of Subjects of the Captains of Pazin Quelled in Blood

The Habsburg rule in Pazin, that is, the rule of the Captain of the County of Pazin as the representative of Austrian (arch)dukes in Istria, also had negative consequences. The population of Pazin was burdened with various codified tributes. On several occasions throughout the 15th and the 16th centuries, the subjects of the Captains of Pazin rebelled against the excessive demands of their masters, but the uprisings were regularly quelled in blood.



Žminj







The Once Important Defence Point of Southern Istria

Žminj, a little town in central Istria, is situated at an altitude of over 350 meters above sea level. It is a position which enabled control of important roads connecting mainland Istria to the western, southern, and eastern shore of the Peninsula, and rich archaeological finds support the fact that the town was inhabited since the prehistoric era.

Already in the Early Middle Ages, Žminj was an important defence point for Istria, particularly its rich southern part. During this turbulent and poorly documented historical period, Slavic populations flocked to Istria and their presence can be reliably established precisely in Žminj by way of archaeological evidence. It is very likely that some fortification elements, primarily the walls, existed already in early medieval age.

Between the Church of Poreč and the Lords of Pazin

The first written record of Žminj dates from 1177 when the place appears in the official acknowledgment of rights of the Bishopric of Poreč issued by Pope Alexander III. Although it fell under the Church of Poreč spiritually, in the secular sphere, Žminj was subjected to Pazin under whose administration it would remain throughout the entire Middle Ages.



Veduta of Žminj, 17th century, source: Johann Weichard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain* (Nurnemberg 1689), Vol. 3

Its characteristic structures, by which the fortified town of Žminj is still recognizable, date from the 15th-century period of the Habsburg administration. It is in this age that the entire settlement was surrounded by walls with four circular towers in each of the four corners of which only the north-western one survives.

Modest Possession of the County of Pazin

For most of its medieval history, Žminj bordered exclusively Gorizian, that is, Austrian territories. As such, the town was not directly exposed to Venetian attacks during the episodes of warfare between Venice and the Patriarchate of Aquileia or the Austrian (arch)dukes. The first Venetian siege of this castle took place in 1508, but Žminj returned under the County of Pazin the same year. During this period, the walled town of Žminj housed around eighty households and boasted a population of around four hundred people; the Captain of Pazin collected a yearly tax of only 59 ducats from Žminj, a fact which makes this place one of the more modest possessions of the County. For comparison's sake, Pazin annually paid 120, Gračišće 230, Pićan 100, Momjan 172 and the Captainate of Završje 322 ducats.

Žminj suffered a heavy blow at the beginning of the 17th century in the midst of the Uskok War when the Venetian military forces occupied the town for a second time. Although it again returned under the jurisdiction of the Austrian archdukes, Venice razed the fortifications before officially consigning Žminj. Nonetheless, judging by the drawings of later 17th-century authors, the walls of Žminj and its tower were renovated soon thereafter.

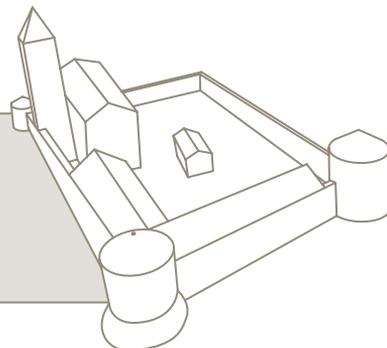


Present-Day Headquarters of the Chakavian Parliament

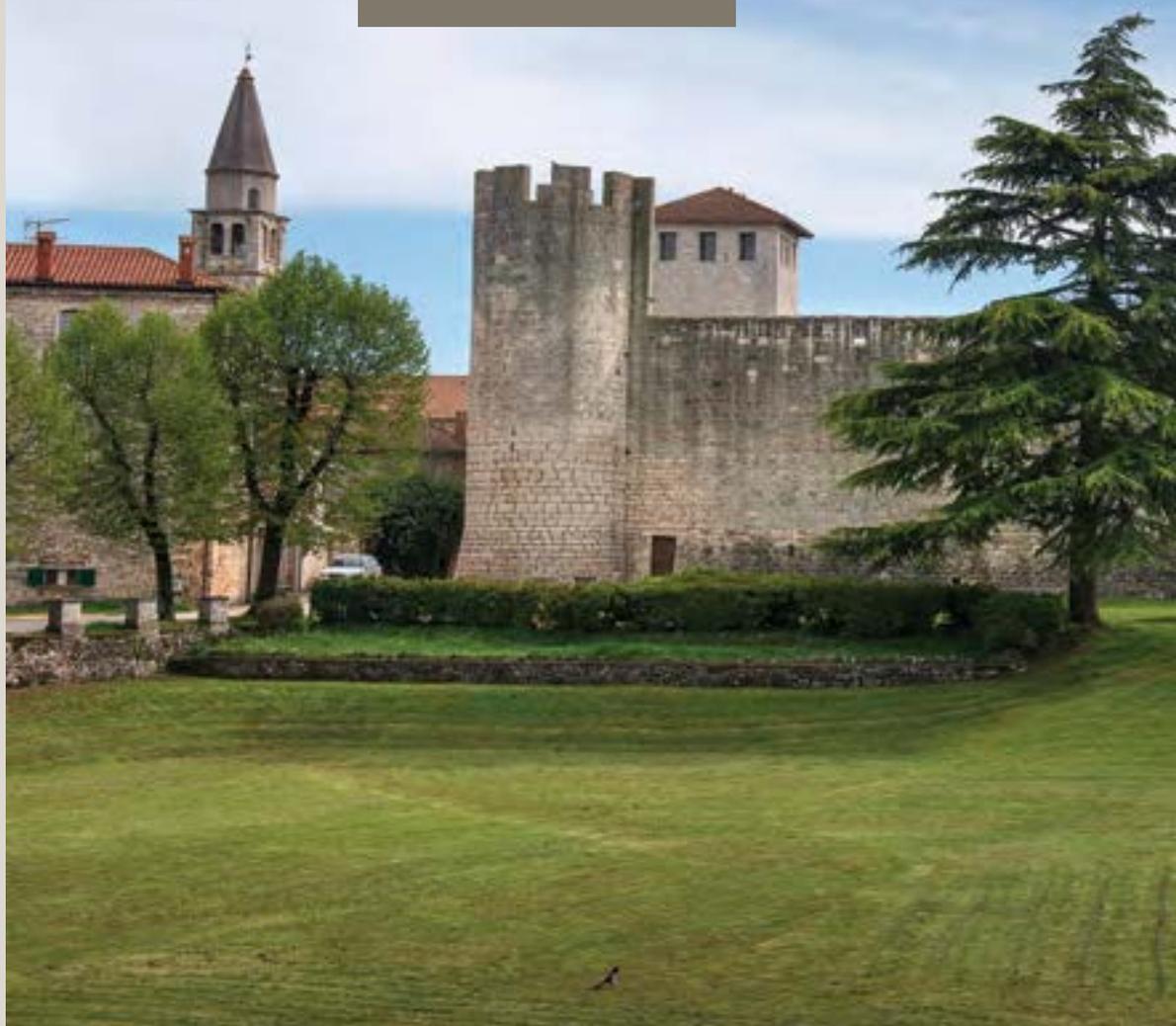
By far the worst period for this fortified town was the Second World War when the German troops bombed central Istria, severely damaging Žminj. The place never fully recovered from this blow and the depopulation waves that began in the post-war period are felt to this day.

Since 1970, Žminj has been the centre of the Chakavian Parliament, an important cultural association whose main task is to preserve and promote Chakavian, a dialect that, along with Istro-Venetian, remains the main cultural and linguistic historical heritage of Istria.

The first written record of Žminj dates from 1177 when the place appears in the official acknowledgment of rights of the Bishopric of Poreč issued by Pope Alexander III.



Savičenta









The Most Picturesque Reminder of the Istrian Middle Ages

Morosini-Grimani Castle in Savičenta is now the most picturesque reminder of the Istrian Middle Ages. The monumental, well-preserved and restored castle with a rectangular floor plan, prominent towers, and a spacious inner courtyard is truly one of the most representative examples of Istrian medieval heritage. However, Savičenta spent most of its medieval history without any fortifications, as a mere village.

Official Residence of the Castropola Family

The earliest history of the locality remains shrouded in mystery. The first written account of Savičenta dates back to the papal confirmation charter issued in 1177 whereby the place is named as the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishopric of Poreč. Secular ownership, however, was divided among the bishops of Poreč and the patriarchs of Aquileia. In the 13th century, the jurisdiction over Savičenta was concentrated in the hands of House Castropola, a dynasty that ruled over Pula as faithful supporters of the churches of Aquileia and Poreč. Since the official residence of the Castropola family in Savičenta existed already at that time, it is very likely that these rulers of Pula laid the foundations from which a monumental fortress would later develop, the one that dominates the place to this day.



In the midst of conflicts between the Counts of Gorizia and the patriarch of Aquileia in the first third of the 14th century, the Castropolas, the loyal supporters of the latter, suffered great destruction from the military contingents led by the Lords of Duino and the Lords of Rihemberk. During these war devastations, which among other things resulted with Pula subjecting itself to Venice, Savičenta was also harmed.

The final member of House Castropola who reigned over this at the time still village, was Volker, who died without issue in the second half of the 14th century. Savičenta was thus inherited by his sister Nicoletta, married to a Venetian nobleman Andrea from the prominent House Morosini. However, Nicoletta's sons managed to retain only one part of Savičenta; the other passed into the hands of the Counts of Gorizia and then, in 1374, to the Habsburgs. In 1380, Austrian dukes relinquish Savičenta to their loyal knight Hugh VIII of Duino, in this period definitely the most powerful nobleman in the entire region. This part of Savičenta estate that was in the hands of the Lords of Duino and later their heirs from House Walsee was apparently more significant than the one gained by the Morosinis: until the second half of the 15th century, Savičenta had been counted as the possession of Austrian Istria, under the control of the delegated Captains of Pazin.



The Morosinis Build and the Grimanis Restore the Castle

Only at the end of the 15th century, after House Walsee had sold all their possessions in Istria and the Karst to the Habsburgs, explicitly including Savičenta, did the family Morosini manage to unite all the jurisdictional rights over this lordship in their hands. It is precisely during this period that the fateful construction of the castle commenced, a project that would forever change the course of Savičenta's history. The new era for this little town thus began in 1485, the year when Morosini Castle was officially erected.

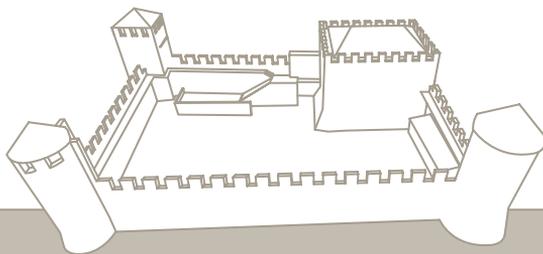
The Morosini family would rule Savičenta until the mid-16th century when power passes over to House Grimani by way of marriage. Throughout this entire period, Savičenta was administered by the delegated captain with the seat of power in the very castle and according to the local statute from 1523. In 1589, Marino Grimani renovates the castle which was then given its distinctive form.

Although it suffered damage as a frontier territory during the wars between Venice and the Habsburgs, Savičenta and its monumental castle, the centres in which population continuity extends to present-day, entered the modern age in a much better state than most Istrian medieval fortresses.

Attractive Cultural and Tourist Jewel of Istria

The castle, the oldest building on the Renaissance square, was renovated and restored in the first half of the 20th century. Today's main cultural and tourist attraction emerged in its full glory after its restoration in 2020. The castle interior and its walls today host various events, including the world-famous Dance and Non-Verbal Theatre Festival and the Medieval Festival.

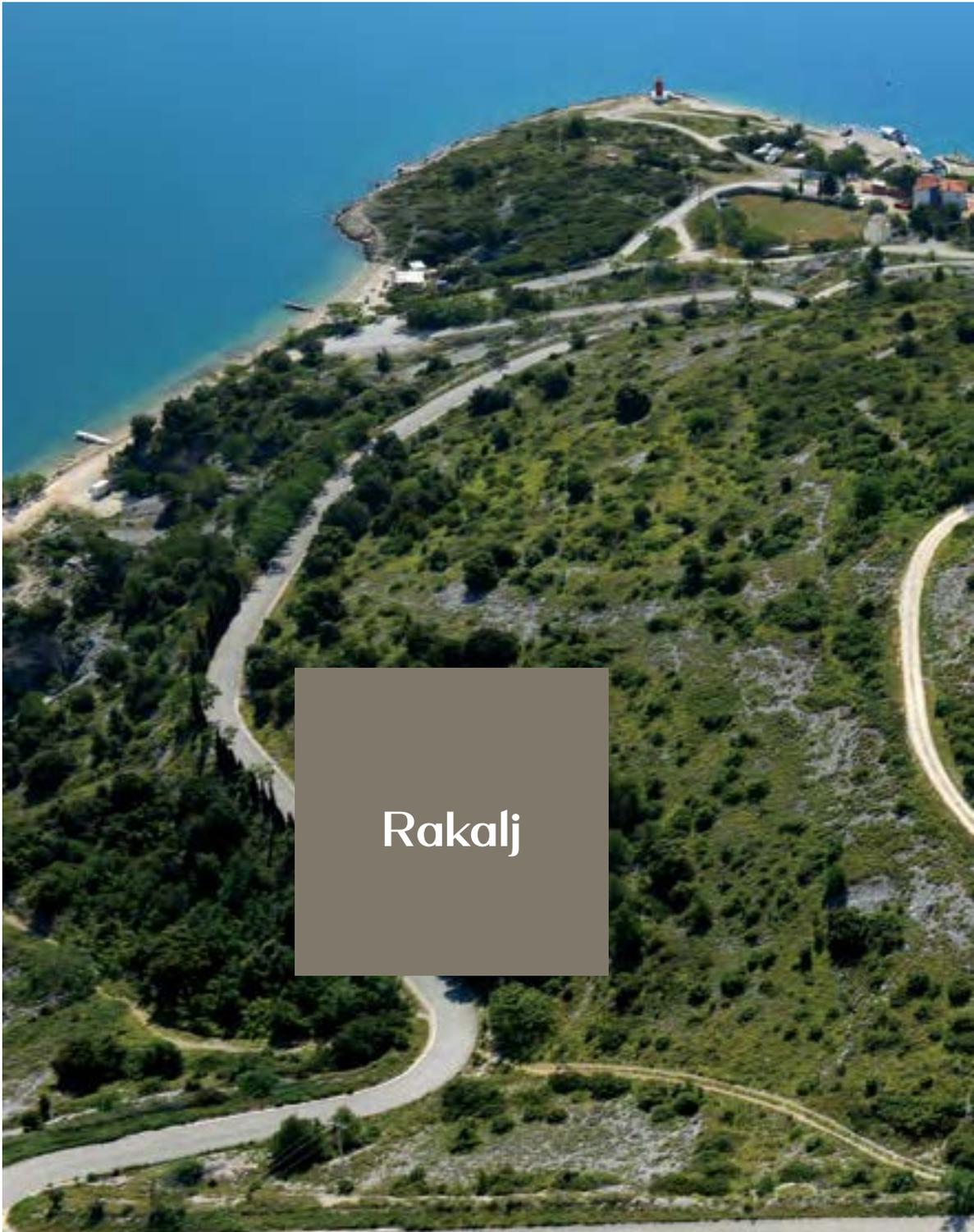
Through the development program "KULTERRA – the Revitalization of Istrian castles Morosini – Grimani and Petrapilosa," funded for the most part by the European Union's European Regional Development Fund, the medieval jewel that is Savičenta is undergoing a new phase of restoration and refurbishing, although it already belongs at the very top of the most attractive cultural tourism destinations of Istria.



The new era for Savičenta, which spent most of its medieval history as a village, started in 1485 when Morosini Castle was officially built.

Morosini-Grimani Castle emerged in its full glory after its restoration in 2020 and it is now the main cultural and tourist attraction in Savičenta. It is the summertime venue of various events, including the world-famous Dance and Non-Verbal Theatre Festival and the Medieval Festival.





Rakalj





The Castle That Was the Dowry of Countess Elisabeth of Gorizia Was Also Sold at Auction

In the Middle Ages, the master of the valley of the River Raša, a fertile and strategically important part of the Istrian peninsula, was certainly Rakalj Castle. The oldest history of this medieval edifice is almost entirely shrouded in a veil of secrecy. The first written source about the castle dates back to 1288, when a certain Wernher from “the New Castle” (*de Castell Novo*) is mentioned. The fact that Rakalj is called “the New Castle” already at the end of the 13th century certainly testifies that there was once an “Old Castle”. That “Old Rakalj” was located two kilometres to the east, on a hill above Cape Sv. Mikula, almost right by the bay. Since historical sources often use the toponyms *Castel Novo* and *Raebel/Rechel* as synonyms, without making a precise distinction between the Old and the New Rakalj, these two castles formed a single lordship and belonged under the same jurisdiction.



Estimated to One Thousand Pounds of Small Pennies

The question of who built these castles and whom they originally belonged to cannot be answered on the basis of primary sources. It is known, however, that Wernher and his son and heir Nasinguerra held Rakalj as knights who answered to the Counts of Gorizia. After the death of Nasinguerra, or very soon after that, Rakalj came under the jurisdiction of Henry of Pazin, one of the most important people of Count Albert I of Gorizia and the general administrator of the possessions of House Gorizia in Istria. In 1312, Rakalj was the dowry of Countess Elisabeth of Gorizia, and its value was estimated to a thousand pounds of small pennies.

When in 1342 brothers Albert III and Maynard VI agreed to divide the hereditary estates of the house, Rakalj (orig. *Rekel*) is explicitly mentioned as an Istrian part that belonged to the younger brother Albert. Like all the estates of Count Albert III of Gorizia, Rakalj too came under the rule of House Habsburg in 1374. By the mid-15th century, Rakalj was ruled by



the captains of Pazin appointed by Austrian archdukes, prominent nobles such as Hugh VIII of Duino and Reinprecht II of Walsee.

During the turbulent years of Ottoman raids in Istria, Emperor Frederick III will hand over Rakalj to Lorenzo Bonomo from Trieste, setting an explicit condition that he must personally defend the castle against possible attacks. At the beginning of the 16th century, Emperor Maximilian I pledged Rakalj and Barban for 9,020 Rhine forints to John de Tassis of Bergamo, a member of a prominent family that revolutionized the postal system of the Holy Roman Empire.

Growth and Development During the Reign of the Loredani

During the War of the League of Cambrai, Rakalj and Barban were occupied by Venetian troops. A detailed report on all the conquered places was soon compiled, from which it is read that in 1508 there were only 28 households in Rakalj. The status of these newly conquered castles was questioned until the arbitration sentence in Trento in 1535, which decided that Venice could retain jurisdiction if the pledge was paid to House Tassis. As early as January 1536, the Venetian Council of Ten decided to pay a pledge to Simon de Tassis, then General Imperial Postmeister. Thus officially began the era of Venice in Rakalj.

However, as early as September 1536, Venice put the jurisdiction over the lordships of Rakalj and Barban up for auction. The winners were brothers Leonardo, Lorenzo, and Francesco from the Venetian patrician family Loredan, the lineage of Santo Stefano, who bought these two castles and all the associated rights for 14,760 ducats.

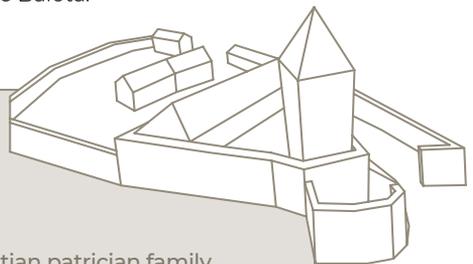
The Loredani ruled Rakalj and nearby Barban until the mid-19th century and the abolition of serfdom. During the centuries of rule of this Venetian house, Rakalj grows and develops, although within the more modest framework of a small Venetian lordship. Thus, the Bishop of Novigrad Giacomo Filippo Tomasini records in the mid-17th century that in the area of Barban and Rakalj there are about three hundred households whose members are mainly engaged in agriculture. The palace of the Loredan family, located in the center of Rakalj, still adorns this picturesque town.



Birthplace of Mijo Mirković Mate Balota

Rakalj is the birthplace of the Istrian intellectual giant Mijo Mirković Mate Balota, a prolific writer and economist whose name is today borne by the High School of Poreč and the Faculty of Economics and Tourism of the Juraj Dobrila University in Pula. Since 1968, a scientific conference dedicated to Istrian economy and culture, *Encounters on a Precious Stone*, has been held in Rakalj every year in memory of Mate Balota.

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An aerial photograph of a village nestled in a lush, green forest. The village features several buildings with red-tiled roofs and a prominent stone structure with a gabled roof. The surrounding landscape is dominated by dense green trees and patches of white rock. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "Kršan and Kožljak" in white.

Kršan and
Kožljak





Strategic Forts on the Natural Boundary

Today's landscape makes the historical role of castles Kršan and Kožljak in the southeast of the Istrian peninsula difficult to comprehend. The two forts rise above the vast Čepić Field and guard the southern pass of the mountain massif Učka which has almost completely lost its significance with the construction of Učka Tunnel that directly connects Istria to the Kvarner region.

In the Middle Ages, however, the geographical situation was considerably different: Učka represented a firm natural boundary between Istria, a land under the Italian Kingdom and then the Holy Roman Empire, and Liburnia, a region over which extended the authority of the kings of the Croatian Kingdom. Therefore, the southern slopes of the Učka mountain massif were privileged zones of contact between the two provinces and this important area was controlled by the Kršan and Kožljak castles. Furthermore, today's Čepić Field, which stretches at the foot of these two castles, was once the largest Istrian lake, a valuable natural resource that was also under the direct control of these strategic fortifications.





Castles Where Knights Ruled From

Of these two castles, distanced from each other less than five kilometres as the crow flies, Kožljak is the older. This fort existed already in the 11th century when it was owned by the margravian House of Weimar-Orlamünde. With a pious gift, Count Ulrich II bequeathed Kožljak to the Church of Aquileia in 1102. In that period, this castle had already lost its original strategic importance because the neighbouring eastern coast of the Istrian peninsula, the so-called Merania, had already been torn from the Croatian Kingdom and annexed to the Holy Roman Empire. Nevertheless, Kožljak, in its impressive strategic location situated at an altitude of 180 meters, was still an extremely important property from which key roads were controlled. Precisely because of its importance, the castle was appropriated by the Counts of Gorizia by way of their loyal knights, who became the *de facto* rulers to the detriment of the Church of Aquileia.

Unlike Kožljak, which enters history ceremoniously and in peaceful conditions through a grant for the salvation of the soul, the first mention of Kršan is framed in a much more violent context. Namely, in the 1274 peace treaty between the patriarch of Aquileia and the Counts of Gorizia, it was mentioned that the latter completely destroyed Kršan Castle, the property of the Church of Aquileia. Although the original date of this castle's construction cannot be determined more precisely, its oldest history is certainly related to the secular state of the Aquileian patriarchs.



Veduta of Kršan, 17th century, source: Johann Weichard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain* (Nurnemberg 1689), Vol. 3

From this period onwards, the fate of the two fortifications above Lake Čepić is similar in many ways: both castles passed into the hands of the Counts of Gorizia who ruled over them by way of their faithful knights. Although Aquileian patriarchs tried to regain power over Kožljak on several occasions, they were ultimately unsuccessful. With the extinction of the Istrian branch of House Gorizia, both castles became the property of the Habsburg family which also left the management of these two estates to their faithful knights.

Gaspar of Kršan Additionally Fortifies Kršan

For the history of Kršan, especially important was the knightly family that named itself after this very castle. The offspring of House Kršan (Germ. *Kherschainer*) ruled over the castle from the mid-15th to the mid-17th century, the period in which the fort assumed the contours by which it is recognizable to this day. In the numerous wars against Venice, Kršan was attacked multiple times, but it fell only once, in 1508, and only temporarily. Gaspar of Kršan then additionally fortified the castle that remained unassailable throughout the Early Modern period.

A stain on the history of this castle was left by Gaspar's descendant George, a notorious murderer and tyrant for whom Venice issued an arrest warrant for the murder of a Venetian subject in Labin. George of Kršan was eventually captured in his own castle (presumably betrayed by his own servants) and taken to Koper, the centre of Venetian Istria, where he was publicly hanged for his many crimes.

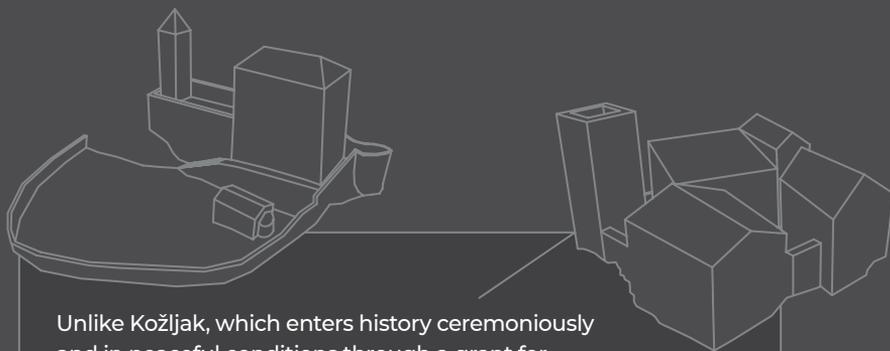


Kožljak as the Centre of the Vast Lordship

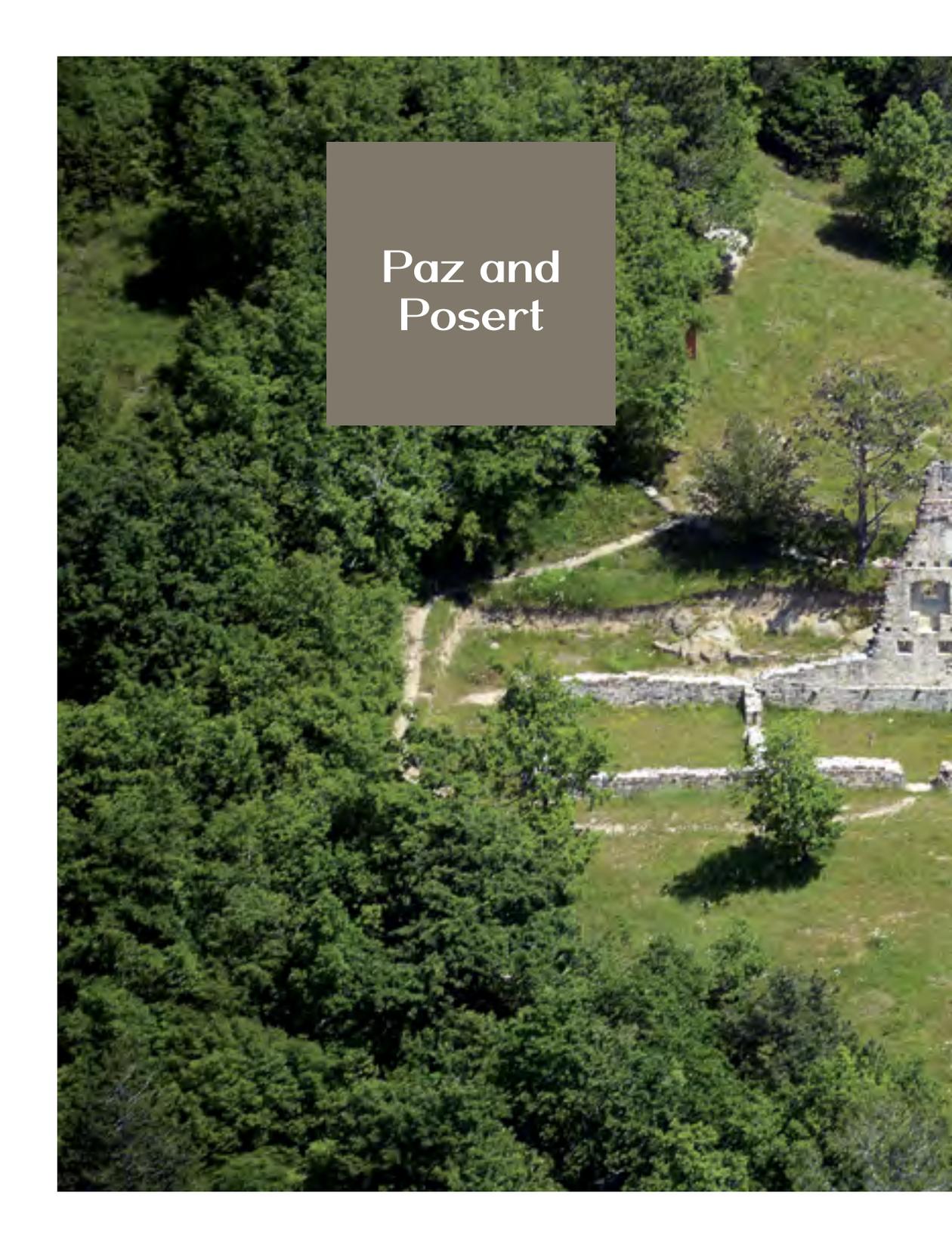
In the meantime, the neighbouring Kožljak grew into a centre of a vast lordship that included Brdo, Kraška, Nova Vas, Letaj, Posert, Jasenovik and Šušnjeвица. The castle was also attacked on several occasions, but it was never permanently conquered. The castle assumed its present-day contours during the administration of the Moses of Senj family who ruled over Kožljak from 1436 to 1529. During this period, the fort was attacked multiple times by the neighbouring lord, Count John VII of Krk (Frankapan), the sworn enemy of Martin of Moses.

After the Moses dynasty, several families managed the lordship of Kožljak which multiplied into smaller estates. In the end, it was the Balbo family that united almost all the jurisdictions over Kožljak in their hands, ruling over this possession for the greater part of the 17th century when the Venetian troops attacked the castle on several occasions. In 1668, Francesco Carlo Balbo sold the entire lordship of House Auersperg. The centre of the lordship was at the time Boljun and no longer Kožljak that had been reduced to an abandoned ruin already by the end of the 17th century. The castle simply never recuperated from the catastrophic consequences of the Veneto-Austrian wars.

The renovation and restoration of these two castles will certainly contribute to the necessary revitalization of Kršan and Kožljak, representative medieval forts that have all the potential to develop in attractive tourist destinations of Istria.



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An aerial photograph of a stone ruin, possibly a castle or fortification, situated in a lush, green valley. The ruin features a prominent tower on the right side and several low stone walls extending across the landscape. The surrounding area is densely forested with green trees, and a dirt path winds through the woods. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image, containing the text "Paz and Posert" in white, sans-serif font.

Paz and Posert

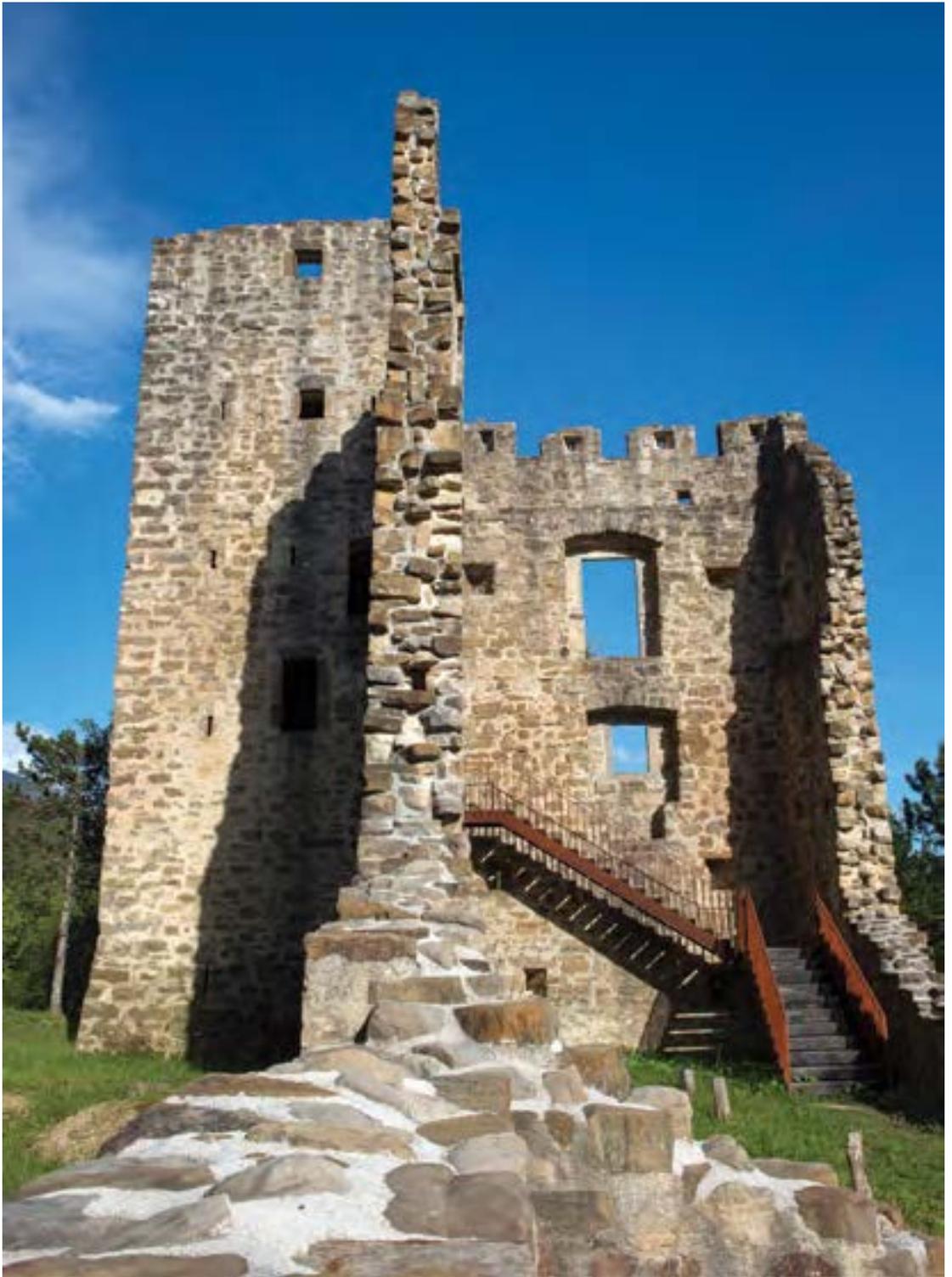




Rulers' Country Residences

In 1064, Henry IV, King and the future Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, donated to his faithful margrave of Carniolan and Istrian march, Ulrich I of Weimar, twenty royal mansi in possession throughout the eastern frontier of Istria. Among these possessions is mentioned a "village of St. Martin." The margrave's son, Count Ulrich II, would bestow upon the Church of Aquileia in 1102, among others, the "castle of St. Martin." These two documents thus clearly illuminate the historical period in which the first castle arose nearby the church of St. Martin above the Letaj Creek. Unfortunately, the subsequent fate of this fort is almost entirely unknown.

St. Martin Castle disappears from the historical records already in the 13th century. Whether the original fortress was destroyed or simply abandoned after it had lost its strategic importance following the takeover of the eastern shore of the Istrian peninsula and the transfer of the border of the Holy Roman Empire from the Učka mountain range to the River Rječina, cannot be ascertained. In any case, from the 15th century onwards a new toponym appears in historical sources, "the village of Posert" which, along with Kožljak, was inherited from House Gotnik by the Moses family from Senj.





Symbol of Luxury of Regional Noblemen

It was precisely during the reign of the Moses dynasty that a new castle was erected in Posert, a fort that will bear the name of Šabec (Germ. Shabez) in historical records. The most recent archaeological research asserts that the fortress was primarily of residential nature, deprived of any concrete military-strategic value. Posert thus entered the Early Modern age as a country residence of the rulers of Kožljak, a symbol of luxury of the regional lords.

However, the fact that it had not been built with military purposes in mind proved fatal. The castle suffered deadly blows during the Vene-to-Austrian wars of the 17th century after which it would never recuperate. The Barbo family, which inherited Posert in 1529, completely abandoned this castle and built a new Baroque-style country residence on the neighbouring hill: Belaj Castle.



Veduta of Paz, 17th century, source: Johann Weichard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain* (Nurnemberg 1689), Vol. 3

Paz Enters the Middle Ages as a Village

Paz, sitting atop a high hill above Boljun Field, distant only two kilometres as the crow flies from Posert, also began its medieval history as a village, but much later. The first mention of this place dates back to the late 13th century when the Patriarch of Aquileia appointed a certain Fricil as his lord. This family, which appears in historical sources under the name “of Paz,” disappears from historical records in the 14th century when the estate passes first into the hands of the Counts of Gorizia and then, in 1374, under the rule of the Habsburgs.

The next known ruler of Paz was the Swabian noble house of Walderstein who also held Račice in Istria. During their reign there was already a castle in Paz, but the fort assumed the contours by which it has been recognizable to this day only during the administration of the Barbo family, Walderstein’s heirs. Namely, in 1570, during the administration of Messaldo Barbo, Paz was thoroughly rebuilt and turned into a primarily residential building. Messaldo, however, would not be remembered by history for his construction projects: in a moment of blinding rage, this ardent protestant killed his own son, Castelman, who remained faithful to Catholicism. Because of this cruel murder, the Lord of Paz was arrested and sentenced to death by decapitation, thus ending his life on the main square of Ljubljana in 1589.

Unlike Posert, Paz survived the war devastation of the 17th century, but in 1668 the entire Kozljak lordship, which included this castle, passed into the hands of the Auersperg family. Having lost its function of the residence of the ruling family and the delegated captains, Paz began to decline, finally reaching its present-day macabre imagery.



Alongside Draguč in Cerovlje's Chain of Castles

Today, both castles are being restored and the ground is being prepared for a thorough renovation which, with the support of the Municipality of Cerovlje, the Region of Istria, and the European Funds for Regional Development, will surely usher in a new era in the rich history of Posert and Paz.

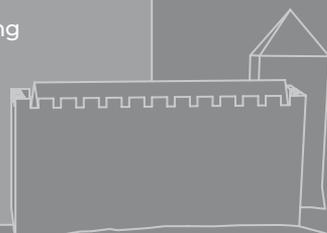
Near Paz is Draguč, also a medieval fortified centre today under the Municipality of Cerovlje, which developed into an undisputed centre of Istrian medieval fresco painting as the seat of the *House of Frescos* through the project "REVITAS II – Upgrading the Revitalization of Istrian Hinterland and the Tourism of Istrian Hinterland", co-financed by the European Union in the framework of Operative Program Slovenia–Croatia 2007–2013. Therefore, the three-member chain of Cerovlje's medieval forts has the perfect potential to develop into a prominent cultural tourism destination.

Ruthless Murderer Messaldo Barbo

Messaldo Barbo, the master of Paz, thoroughly rebuilt the castle in 1570 and turned it into a residential building. However, this ardent protestant would be remembered by history for a horrendous event: in a moment of blinding rage, he killed his own son, Castelman, who remained faithful to Catholicism. Because of this cruel murder, the Lord of Paz was arrested and sentenced to death by decapitation, thus ending his life on the main square of Ljubljana in 1589.



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Lupoglav





The Former Jewel of Gorizian Istria at the Foot of Čićarija

The ruins of the once important Istrian castle Lupoglav are located in a prominent position, on the hill Gradina at 829 meters above sea level at the foot of the mountain massif Čićarija. Built on a strategic position that controls two key roads, one connecting Liburnia through Istria with the Karst and Friuli, and the other connecting the valley of the River Raša to Buzet, Lupoglav was one of the most valuable castles of mainland Istria during the medieval and Early Modern Ages. It was a real gem of Gorizian and later Austrian Istria.



It Was Used to Buy the Favour of Istrian Potentates

The oldest history of Lupoglav has not been fully clarified. The mysterious toponym *Lompaga* mentioned as one of the estates that Roman King Henry IV bestowed to his faithful Margrave of Istria Ulrich I of Weimar as a reward for exemplary service in the war against the Hungarian King Bela I very probably refers to Lupoglav. Although not explicitly mentioned in the donation of Ulrich II from 1102, Lupoglav probably came under the rule of the Church of Aquileia together with the entire Istrian patrimony of the count's house.

Lupoglav is then mentioned in historical sources only in 1264, as a castle under the direct rule of the Patriarchate of Aquileia. At this time Patriarch Gregory of Montelongo bequeaths it upon Henry of Pazin and his wife Elizabeth of Petrapilosa, persons loyal to the Counts of Gorizia. It is a gift by which the patriarch intended to ensure good relations with the Istrian potentates. He was unsuccessful in this plan as only three years later a great conflict broke out in which Albert I of Gorizia and Henry of Pazin fought against him.



Veduta of Lupoglav, 17th century, source: Johann Weichard Valvasor, Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain (Nurnemberg 1689), Vol. 3

In Historical Vortex Between Inheritance and Sale

With Gregory's bestowal, the Church of Aquileia forever lost this strategic castle, which will be ruled by knights loyal to House Gorizia during the medieval centuries. In 1362, Count Albert III of Gorizia will sell Lupoglav and the whole appertaining estate to Erchard of Eberstein, thus beginning a long and complicated story of sale and inheritance of this distinctive castle and its estate which included four more villages: Gorenja and Dolenja Vas, Lesiščina and Semič and separate possessions: Krajcar Breg, Krbune, Sutivanac and Šumber.

By way of marriage, the Styrian House Herberstein inherited the estates of House Eberstein from Carinthia in the 15th century, and it were the offspring of this noble family that were also responsible for the reconstruction of Lupoglav Castle.

In 1525, the Herbersteins surrendered the castle to Ferdinand of Habsburg, the ruler of the Istrian county, for 10,000 Rhine forints. The Austrian archdukes then left the castle to Petar Kružić, a military leader from Senj and hero who distinguished himself in the wars against the Ottomans, especially in the defence of Klis. By marriage of Peter's daughter Johanna to John Sinković from Senj, Lupoglav changed owners yet again. The Sinković family ruled the castle throughout the turbulent 17th century, fighting on the side of the Habsburgs against the Venetians in Istria, when a new refortification of this strategic castle took place.



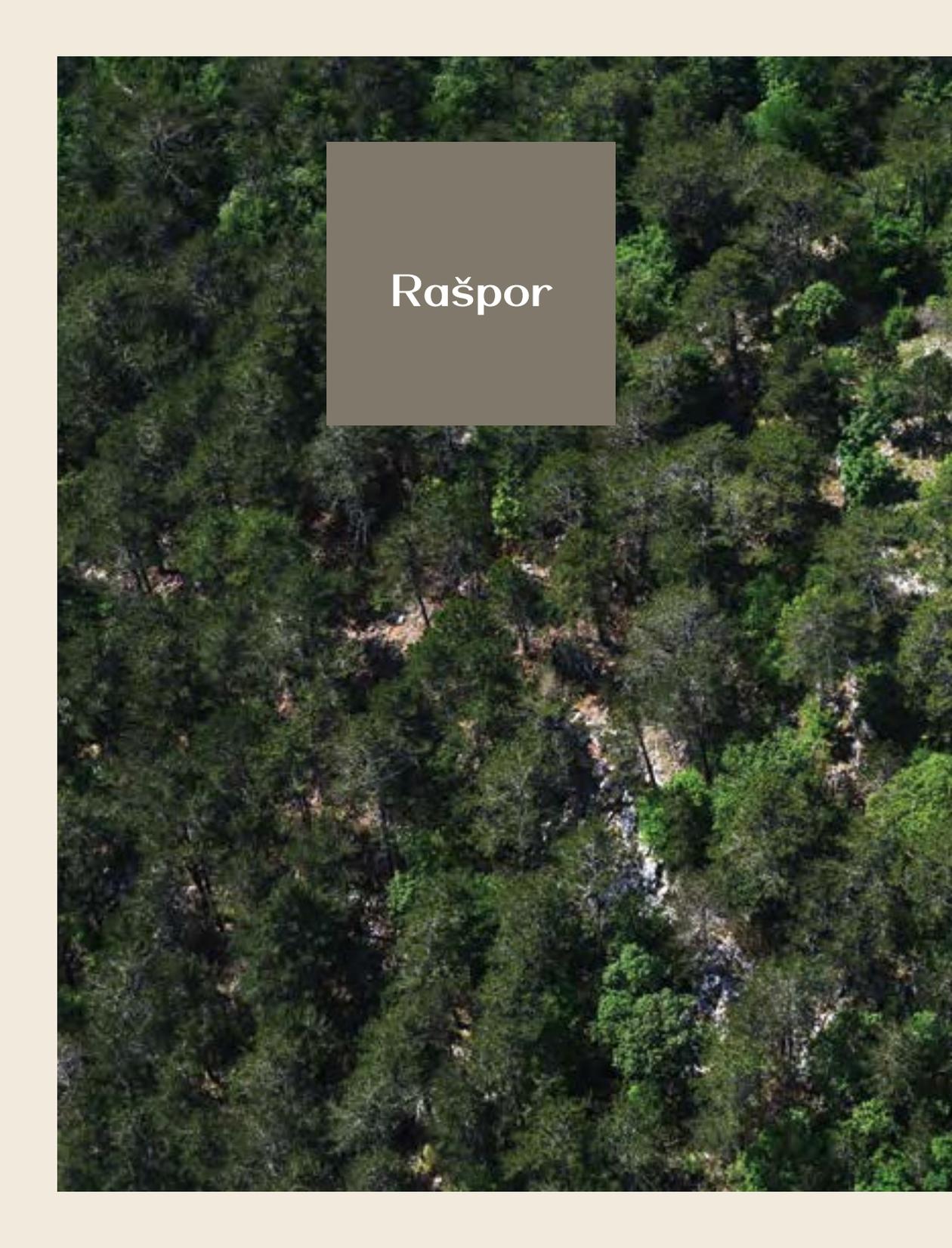
Frighteningly Rapid Decay of the Monumental Edifice

In 1634, Lupoglav was bought by Pompeo Brigido from Trieste and the estate remained the property of this family until the mid-19th century. It was under the administration of this family that the old Lupoglav Castle was abandoned, and a new monumental residence was built in a more accessible position – today's Brigido Castle. With its abandonment and the construction of a new castle begins the steep decline of old Lupoglav. In 1847, under the rule of Brigido, there was a great revolt of Lupoglav serfs that the authorities quelled by arms – the last peasants' revolt in Istria. In the end, sisters Paolina and Ferdinanda, the daughters and heiresses of Paolo Brigido, who lost his life in a duel in Vienna at the age of 24, sell the lordship of Lupoglav to Tomaso Sottocorona from Vodnjan. He then, as early as 1895, offered it for sale to the Margraviate of Istria.

At the end of the 19th century, when Sottocorona put it up for sale, Brigido Castle was still in a habitable condition, an imposing relic of the Early Modern era. But soon, with frightening speed, he too collapsed, becoming very much like old Lupoglav a dilapidated and neglected building, as it unfortunately remains even to this day.

Lupoglav is certainly a valuable candidate for a thorough renovation and, once it regains at least part of its old splendour, the castle could certainly become an attractive tourist destination as one of the main links in the chain of castles along the River Raša.

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An aerial photograph of a dense forest, likely a pine forest, covering a hillside. The trees are a mix of dark green and lighter green, with some bare patches of earth visible. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the word "Rašpor" in white text.

Rašpor



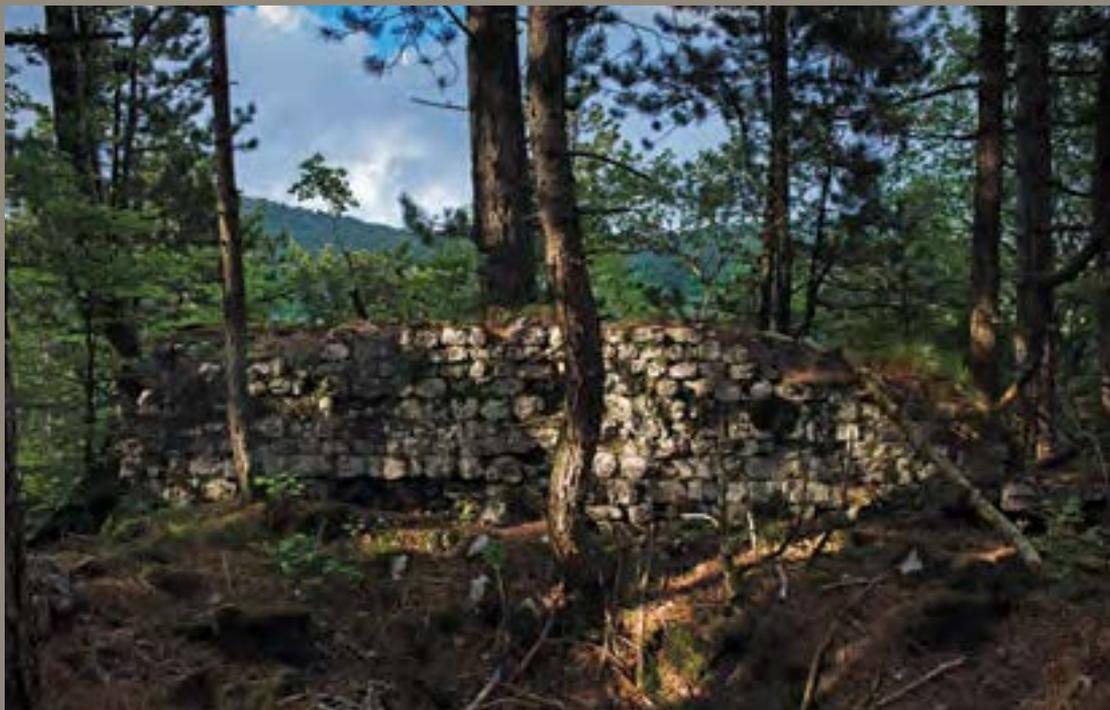


The Key to Entire Istria

Located in an exceptional strategic position from which important roads connecting Istria to the Karst, Carniola and Friuli are controlled, Rašpor has ruled the so-called northern gates of the Istrian peninsula for centuries. Precisely because of this extraordinary strategic potential, the Venetian Senate named Rašpor "The Key to entire Istria".

From a Strategically Important Point to the Periphery of Gorizian Estates

Rašpor appears in historical sources relatively late, only in the second half of the 13th century when the Counts of Gorizia had already built the foundations of their lordship in Istria. Thus, on 20 March 1264, in the company of prominent knights in the service of House Gorizia, a certain Philip of Rašpor is mentioned as a signatory of the agreement between the Counts of Gorizia and the Patriarch of Aquileia Gregory of Montelongo. Therefore, it can be concluded that this Karstic castle – of great importance for the Counts of Gorizia as it connected their estates in Istria to those in the Karst and Friuli – began its earliest history as the property of the Gorizians who left it to the administration of their prominent knights of confidence.



During the 14th century, Rašpor continues to develop as a property of House Gorizia that is managed by their loyal ministerials, that is, their service nobility. However, with the 1342 division of Gorizian patrimony, Rašpor did not fall under Istria, but under the Karst, and thus became the property of the Friulian-Karstic branch represented by brothers Maynard VI and Henry III. In this historical period, the House of Gorizia had already lost its power and was heading towards its infamous fall; the lack of money forced the brothers to pledge Rašpor. The castle was first pledged in 1354 to Count George of Krbava, who will appear in the sources with the toponymic surname from Rašpor as Count *Jörg von Raspurg*.

When in 1374 all Istrian estates of House Gorizia came under the rule of the Habsburgs, Rašpor completely lost its former strategic importance for the advocates of the Church of Aquileia as it was now on the very periphery of Gorizian estates.

For Venice the Extremely Important Captainate of Rašpor

The Counts of Gorizia pledged this strategically almost worthless castle to their sister Anne for thirteen thousand ducats. Despite marrying into a powerful Hungarian-Croatian noble house, the Counts of Krk

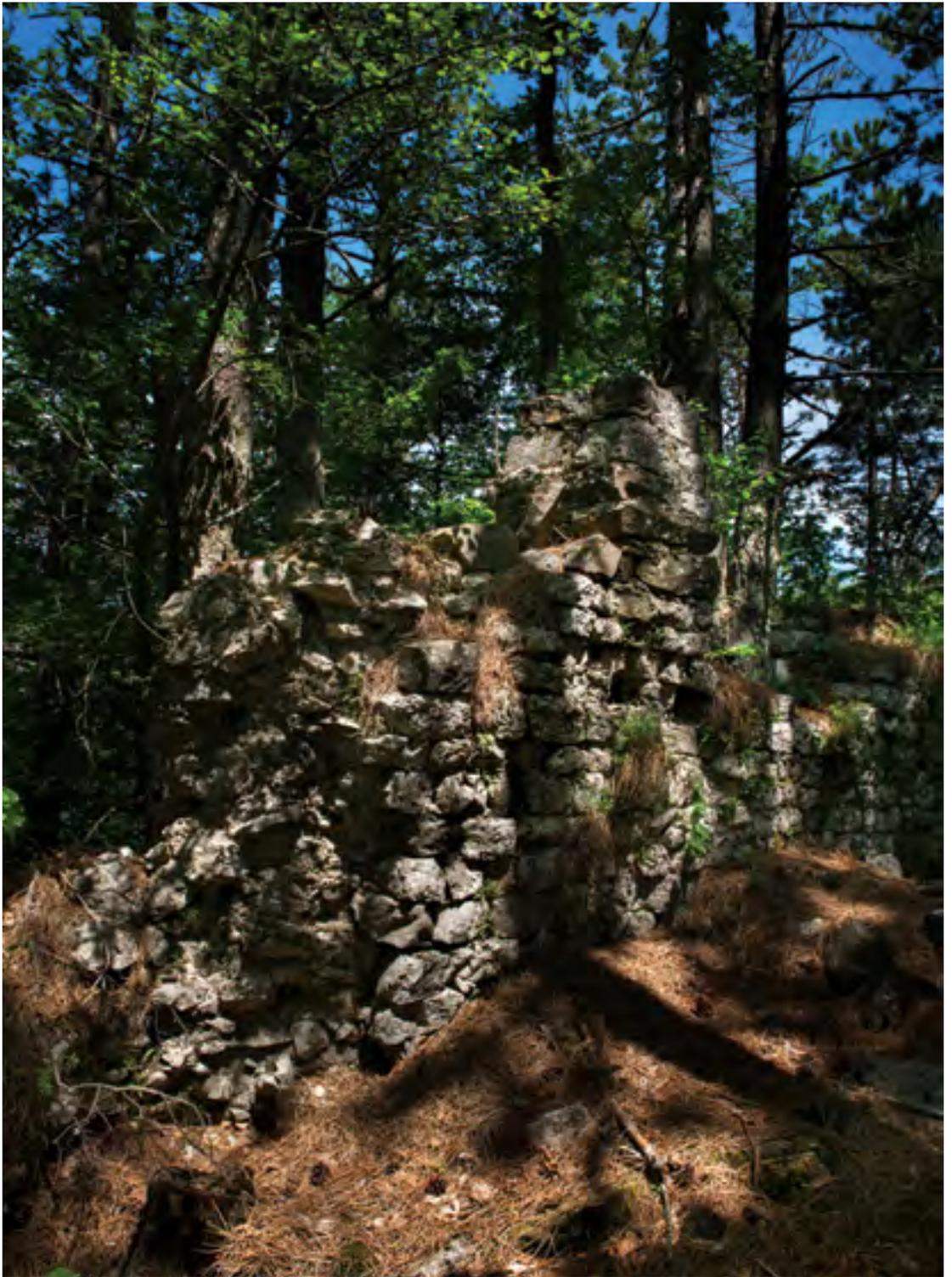
(later Frankapan), Anne fell into an unenviable financial situation after the death of her husband John V († 29 November 1393). Therefore, in December of 1393, she knocked on the door of the Venetian Senate and offered Venice her castle Rašpor as a pledge. Unlike the House of Gorizia, to Venice Rašpor was a possession of great strategic importance. The castle controlled the mainland entrance to the region that was at the time largely under Venetian jurisdiction. Therefore, in just a few days, Venice accepted Anne's offer and finally, in 1402, bought Rašpor for twenty thousand golden ducats. Thus began the era of Venice, which organized its military-defensive centre for the entire province, the so-called Captainate of Rašpor, in this very castle immediately after assuming jurisdiction.

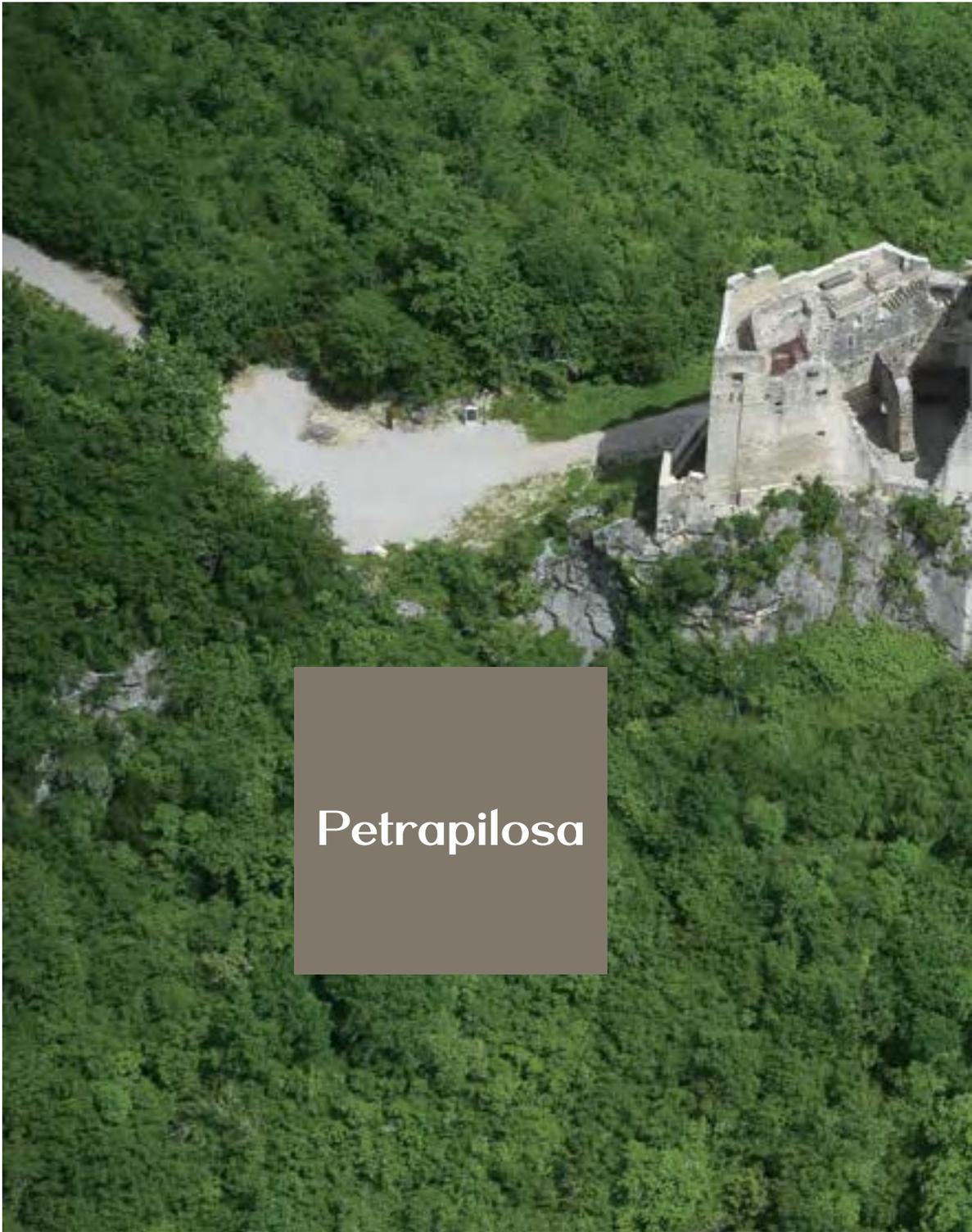
Rašpor served as the main military-defensive centre of Venetian Istria throughout the 15th century, but it still did not survive the War of the League of Cambrai fought in Istria between 1508 and 1514. Namely, it was during this war that the Habsburg forces attacked, besieged, and set the castle on fire on several occasions. In the end, the castle was so devastated and damaged that the Venetian Senate decided that Rašpor would not be rebuilt. In 1511, the headquarters of the Captains of Rašpor and the military-defensive centre of the entire Venetian Istria were officially moved to nearby Buzet that thus overnight became one of Venice's most important centres on the Istrian peninsula.

In Ruins Since the War of the League of Cambrai

From the fatal War of the League of Cambrai to the present day, Rašpor has been lying in ruins; not a single official road leading to his neglected corpse. Certainly, the former famous "Key of the entire Istria" deserves a thorough restoration and reconstruction, which will, hopefully, take place under the auspices of the next phases of the project of restoration and valorisation of Istrian medieval castles.

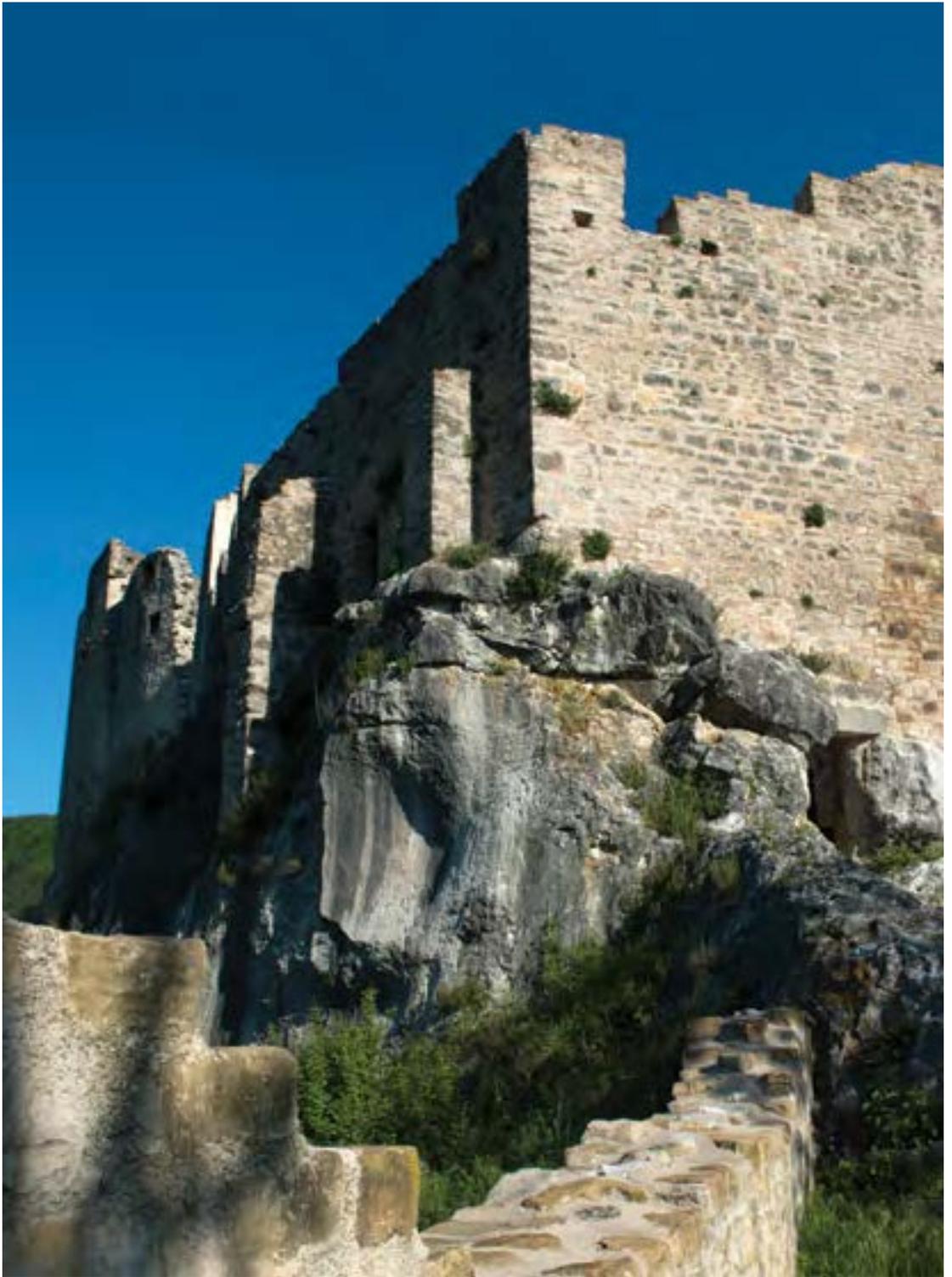
The Counts of Gorizia pledged Rašpor Castle to their sister Anne for thirteen thousand ducats. Despite marrying into a powerful Hungarian-Croatian noble house, the Counts of Krk (later Frankapan), Anne fell into an unenviable financial situation after the death of her husband John V († 29 November 1393). Therefore, in December of 1393, she knocked on the door of the Venetian Senate and offered to Venice her castle as a pledge. Her offer was immediately accepted, and in 1402 Venice bought Rašpor for twenty thousand golden ducats.





Petrapilosa







The Hairy Castle – the Jewel in the Crown of Istrian Medieval Forts

Petrapilosa Castle, also known as the Hairy Castle, is one of the most distinctive Istrian medieval buildings. Unassailable guardian of the northern tributaries of Mirna, fertile valleys, and important roads, Petrapilosa has for centuries decorated the inlands of northern Istria as one of the most prominent Istrian medieval monuments. Built on an exceptional strategic position, on a hilltop above the River Bračina at an altitude of 119 meters, the castle's function was not solely of military-defensive nature: as a residence of seminal figures of Istrian medieval and Early Modern history, it brimmed with symbolic value.

The Shield of a Rich Microregion

The oldest history of Petrapilosa is shrouded in the veil of mystery and vague data from the surviving historical sources. In 1066 Roman King Henry IV donated the village Zrenj to his faithful subject Adalbert. Shortly thereafter, at the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th century, a castle dubbed “Hairy Rock” (Lat. Petra Pilosa, Ital. Pietra Pelosa) sprouted in the vicinity of Zrenj and the entire area passed under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Aquileia.



Within the secular authority of the Aquileian Church, the “Hairy Castle” develops into a main “bulwark” of the rich microregion than included Buzet to the west and Opatalj to the east, places also in the hands of the Patriarchs of Aquileia. From the 13th century onwards, a Vulvingus of Petrapilosa begins to be mentioned in historical sources, the primogenitor of the knightly dynasty that assumed the name of this castle and that would rule over it until the mid-14th century as one of the most excellent Istrian noble houses. Faithful knights of the Aquileian Church and its metropolitans, the members of the Petrapilosa family waged war against the Counts of Gorizia, the rulers of the neighbouring County of Pazin, several times. In one such conflict, brothers Henry and Carstman of Petrapilosa sneaked into Momjan Castle and insidiously murdered Biaquin, the fort’s lord and one of the main supporters of the Counts of Gorizia and Pazin. The blood feud that ensued ended with the invasion of Petrapilosa and the decapitation of both of Vulvingus’s grandsons. After this bloody episode, the subsequent generations of House Petrapilosa faithfully supported the Counts of Gorizia, even against their original masters, the Patriarchs of Aquileian Church.

The Main Residence of Istrian Margraves

After the extinction of the Petrapilosa dynasty, the castle passed to the Aquileian metropolitans as their direct possession and soon thereafter became the main residence of Istrian margraves, delegated officials who governed the Margraviate of Istria in the name of the patriarchs. However, ever increasing conflicts with Venice led to a long battle between

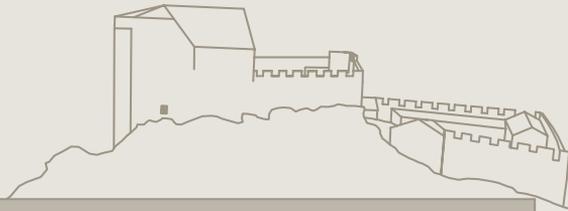
the Most Serene Queen of the Adriatic and the weakened Aquileian Church, a war that resulted, after years of siege, with the Venetian takeover of Petrapilosa in July of 1421.

Although originally subjected to Venetian Koper, Petrapilosa was given as a sort of reward in 1440 to Niccolò de Gravisi, a prominent citizen of Piran who famously uncovered an anti-Venetian conspiracy in Padua, as a hereditary possession. From this day until the mid-17th century, Petrapilosa had been the symbolic heart of the most prominent flower of Istrian nobility, the marquises of House De Gravisi.

Frequent conflicts with the subjects of the Austrian archdukes and the general impotence of Early Modern Venice (and especially Venetian Istria), catalysed the gradual decline of this former flagship of Istrian castles. The fact that the De Gravisi themselves moved their residence to Koper additionally worsened the unenviable condition of the “Hairy Castle”. Following the fire of the 1620s and despite the wishes of some of the De Gravisi family members, Petrapilosa would no longer be rebuilt. From that day to the most recent times, Petrapilosa stands abandoned in its original place, its dilapidated walls reminiscent of the ancient glory of this “Istrian Camelot,” a representative jewel of medieval Istria.

An Important Place on the Cultural Map of Istria

With the project “KULTERRA – the Revitalization of Istrian Castles,” Petrapilosa has been repaired and restored for the last quarter of the century. The European Union, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the City of Buzet, the Veneto Region and the Region of Istria all finance this ambitious project that will transform the derelict capital of Istrian medieval castles into a new leading cultural tourism attraction in Istria.



A bloody event whose main protagonists were brothers Henry and Carstman of Petrapilosa occurred in the second half of the 13th century. These loyal knights of the Church of Aquileia sneaked into Momjan Castle and treacherously murdered Biaquin of Momjan, one of the main advocates of the Counts of Gorizia and Pazin. The bloody revenge that soon ensued ended with an attack on Petrapilosa and the murder of both brothers.



**Most Important
Noble Houses
of Medieval Istria**



Weimar – Orlamünde coat of arms, source: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Cod. icon. 307: Sammlung von Wappen aus verschiedenen, besonders deutschen Ländern, p. 490

Margraves Weimar–Orlamünde

The Mighty Ones Who Altered the Course of Istrian History

Following the transfer of Istria from the Kingdom of Italy to the Duchy of Bavaria in 952, the Istrian peninsula became a borderland area of the restored Roman Empire under the Ottonian dynasty. A century later, the first “margrave of Istria” – a count of the borderland in the literal translation of the term – appears in primary sources, an Ulrich. He was an offspring of a prominent Thuringian family with its seat of power in Weimar and Orlamünde which emerged in the areas of Carniola and Istria by marriage to the powerful Bavarian noble house of Sempt-Ebersberg. Faithful supporters of Henry IV, young king and later emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Margrave Ulrich enjoyed the support of the imperial court. As Margrave of Carniolan and Istrian marches, Ulrich reigned over an expansive territory that stretched from Tolmin to the west up to the River Drava in the east, to the very border with the at the time inimical Kingdom of Hungary. In his decade-long mandate (c. 1060–† 1070), this margrave gained jurisdiction over a number of Istrian estates, either through imperial grants or through gifts of local landowners who would thus “buy” Ulrich’s favour, or by way of some other, undocumented methods. With Ulrich’s early and sudden death, the family patrimony was divided between the two minor sons, Popo III and Ulrich II, the latter of whom obtained Istrian estates. The two brothers eventually became estranged from each another, finding themselves on the opposite sides of the fateful conflict between the popes and the emperors. Supporting the Emperor and with no surviving descent, Ulrich II had to make sure that his father’s lands did not fall in the hands of Popo III and his pro-papal allies. Thus, in 1102, he issued an immensely generous donation charter in Aquileia, conferring upon the Aquileian Church and the incumbent patriarch – also a fervent supporter of Emperor Henry IV – almost all of his possessions in Istria. This donation is also a “birth certificate” of a number of Istrian castles.

With their actions, the offspring of margraval and comital House Weimar-Orlamünde changed the course of Istrian history forever.



Coat of arms of the Counts of Gorizia, source: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Cod. icon. 307: Sammlung von Wappen aus verschiedenen, besonders deutschen Ländern, c. 1600

The Counts of Gorizia

The Most Influential Noble Family in Medieval Istria

By far the most influential noble family in the context of medieval Istria, the Counts of Gorizia stem from House Meinhardines that ruled in the district of Lienz in present-day Austria. From the marriage between Meinhard III and Diemut of Spanheim, the sister of Henry of Gorizia, Meinhard of Gorizia was born who also inherited the advocacy over the Church of Aquileia from his maternal uncle. Meinhard's grandson, Count Engelbert III of Gorizia, would expand the family's patrimony over Istria by way of another marriage, wedding the rich heiress of Count Meinhard of Istria Mathilda of Pazin. In the 13th century, House Gorizia emerged as an extremely powerful noble family whose members would also be adorned with titles of the Counts of Tirol and Dukes of Carinthia. Eager to wage war, especially against, at least in theory, their superiors, the Patriarchs of Aquileia, the Gorizians were among the principal instigators of numerous conflicts that forever changed the political map of the Istrian peninsula and the very course of the history of Istria. Although they would end up losing every war against the Republic of Venice, the Gorizians successfully fought against the Aquileian Patriarchs, subjecting to themselves and their loyal knights numerous lordships across Friuli, the Karst, and Istria. Numerous castles in Istria exemplify such transfers of ownership.

In 1342, House Gorizia was divided into the Istrian and Friulian branches. Count Albert III, the first and last offspring of the Istrian branch of this powerful house, would sign the treaty of inheritance with House Habsburg in 1364, according to which in the case of one's party heirless death, the other inherits its patrimony. Shortly thereafter, in 1374, Albert III of Gorizia died without surviving issue, introducing the Austrian (arch) dukes to the historical stage of Istria.



Coat of arms of the House of Duino, source: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Cod. icon. 307: Sammlung von Wappen aus verschiedenen, besonders deutschen Ländern, c. 1600

The House of Duino

Mighty Knights, Rulers of Strategically Important Castles in the Northern Adriatic

In the mid-11th century, a knightly house that ruled in the name of the Aquileian Church over Duino, a castle to the north of Trieste that still adorns the coast of the Julian region, emerged on the historical stage. From its very beginnings, the Duino family also served the Aquileian advocates, the Counts of Gorizia. As knights in service of both the patriarch and House Gorizia, in the course of the 13th century the Lords of Duino became one of the most powerful knightly families in the Northern Adriatic who ruled over a number of strategically important castles. Besides Duino, the offspring of this house had Rijeka, Prem, Senožeče, Veprinac, Kastav, Mošćenice and Brseč on the eastern shore of the Istrian peninsula, as well as Momjan. It is precisely the Duino-Momjan line founded by Woscalus III that gave some of the most important personalities of the Istrian 13th century: Cono, who was the rector of Piran and Buje, and Biaquin, who presided over Novigrad, Poreč, and Motovun. By way of marriage, they were tied to House Rihemberk, also knights faithful to the Counts of Gorizia. In the midst of one of the conflicts between the Aquileian Patriarchs and the Counts of Gorizia in the 13th and 14th centuries, the Lords of Momjan were fickle to support now Venice and now the Gorizians, which would sometimes cost them their possessions. The House of Duino reached its zenith under Hugo VIII who swore fealty to House Habsburg in 1366 thereby abandoning the Counts of Gorizia, their traditional seniors.

The male line of House Duino died out with Hugo IX in 1399 when the family's entire patrimony passed into the hands of Reinprecht II of Walsee, the husband of Hugo's sister Catherine.



Portrait of Rudolf IV of Habsburg, c. 1360–1365,
source: Domund Diözesanmuseum Wien, L-II: Rudolfus Archidux Austriae –
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House Habsburg, the (Arch)dukes of Austria Mighty Lords of the County of Istria

House Habsburg, one of the most famous European dynasties, left a deep imprint on the history of Istria. Stemming from Habsburg Castle in present-day Swiss canton Aargau, this noble house rose during the 13th century by way of cunning marriage alliances and successful military campaigns to gain power over the southern German duchies. Rudolf I of Habsburg, the king of the Holy Roman Empire, laid the foundations upon which one of the leading European dynasties would build its power, especially after he had beaten Ottokar II of Bohemia, at the time the ruler of the duchies of Austria, Styria, Carinthia and the March of Carniola.

In the area of the Aquileian Patriarchate and Istria, the Habsburgs associate themselves with the Counts of Gorizia and House Duino, the latter promising their fealty and service with all their castles in 1366. In this way, the hereditary dukes of Austria reached the Adriatic Sea.

After inheriting the entire patrimony of the Istrian branch of House Gorizia, the Habsburgs become the lords of the County of Istria, a jurisdictional region that included, besides the County of Pazin, separate lordships such as Kožljak, Lupoglav, Završje and Momjan. In the name of Austrian dukes (archdukes from the 15th century onwards), these estates were managed by numerous prominent knights and persons of trust like the Lords of Duino and their successors, the offspring of House Walsee.

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